

**The Development of Kenneth Leighton's Musical Style  
from 1929 to 1960 and a Complete Catalogue  
of his Compositions from 1929 to 1988**

**Part One**

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# Abstract of Thesis

## **The Development of Kenneth Leighton's Musical Style from 1929 to 1960 and a Complete Catalogue of his Compositions from 1929 to 1988.**

This thesis aims to chart the development of the composer Kenneth Leighton's musical style up until he was around 30 years of age, using a wide variety of sources. I have been able to separate these first 30 years of his life into five clear sections which can be seen to correspond with his various locations during his most formative years. Each period can be shown to have affected Leighton's stylistic development in a number of ways, ranging from influences, mentors and teachers to the locations themselves. In charting his development, I have included an element of reception history, which can also be viewed as influential on the direction of a composer. Also included is a substantial amount of biographical material that helps to provide a clear picture of events and how they are linked to his progress as a composer. I have attempted to present a detailed journey by genre through his compositions from this period, highlighting characteristic recurring features and motifs, using prose analysis and a significant number of musical examples.

The catalogue of Leighton's compositions that has been included in this thesis began as a complete list of works intended to form an appendix. In reaction to the publication of a bio-bibliography of Kenneth Leighton in the USA in 2004,<sup>1</sup> I was prompted to extend the list to become the first complete, detailed and comprehensive catalogue of his works. My research also resulted in the exact contents of the Kenneth Leighton Archive (held in

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Carolyn, *Kenneth Leighton: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004)

Special Collections at the University of Edinburgh) being recorded for the first time. In compiling this compendious catalogue, I have used Leighton's original manuscripts themselves; his own record of his composing activities, found in his three personal and unpublished 'Composition Books'; published editions of his works; reviews of first performances, from a large number of sources; programmes from first performances; and programme notes written by Leighton himself.

The appendix consists of an edition of an early secular cantata for tenor, flute, chorus and strings, *Veris Gratia* Opus 6. This unpublished work has been performed twice, which, until now, was in manuscript. The presented edition consists of both a vocal and a short score of the work.



# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people who have given me tremendous assistance and support in preparing this thesis: Paul Baxter, Jonathan Bielby, Giles Brightwell, Angela Brownridge, Nathalie Caron, Eugene Castillo, Victoria and Richard Cockbain, Christopher Finzi, Edward Harper, Caroline Higgett, Kate Johnson (of Novello), Richard Marshall, James MacMillan, Nigel Osborne, the Philippines Philharmonic Orchestra, Michael Riordan (of The Queen's College, Oxford), John Scott, Nigel Simeone, David Smith (of Novello), Fiona Southey (of Novello), Paul Spicer, Dennis Townhill, Morley Whitehead (of Edinburgh University Library), John Wilkinson (of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield) and Sally Willison (of Lengnick).

Thanks must be given to my supervisor Noel O'Regan, who has advised me, read each draft of the text and made a large number of vital suggestions throughout my completion of this thesis. A special mention should also go to Robert Leighton who kindly lent me scores and supplied with me with detailed reminiscences.

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My sincerest thanks go to Libby Jones, who has always been there to help, encourage and support in any, and every, way. Libby has always been the first person to read the text and her contribution and suggestions have been invaluable.

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# Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by me, in accordance with the University of Edinburgh Thesis Regulations, and that the work presented is my own.

I confirm that no part of the material offered has been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University. In all other cases material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.

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Adam S. Binks  
University of Edinburgh  
30 June 2006

# Musical Examples

## Chapter 1

**Ex. 1.1:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G major* (1945) – movement 1, bars 1 to 8 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.2:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1945) – movement 3, bars 13 to 21 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.3:** *I vow to thee my country* (1945) – bars 1 to 8 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.4:** *Remembrance* (1946) – bars 96 to 101 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.5:** *Impromptu* (1946) – bars 1 to 12 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.6:** *Roadways* – (1946) bars 1 to 12 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.7:** *I will make you brooches* (1946) – bars 1 to 6 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.8:** *Festival Overture* (1946) – bars 34 to 39 (unpublished)

**Ex. 1.9:** *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 1, bars 1 to 12 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)

**Ex. 1.10:** *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 2, bars 1 to 10 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)

**Ex. 1.11:** *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 2, bars 20 to 24 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)

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**Ex. 1.13:** *Three Songs from Campania I* (1946) – bars 15 to 25 (unpublished)

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- Ex. 2.4ii: *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6 – *Epilogue*, bars 1 to 6 (Unpublished)
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- Ex. 2.8: *Scherzo Festivo for Orchestra* (1948) – bars 1 to 7 (unpublished)
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- Ex. 2.13i: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 1, bars 5 to 9 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
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- Ex. 2.14: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 3, bars 1 to 6 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
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- Ex. 2.24i: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 4, bars 37 to 41 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)



- Ex. 2.24ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 4, bars 57 to 60 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)
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- Ex. 2.27: *Five Shakespeare Songs* (1951): *Come away, death* – bars 10 to 12 (The Kenneth Leighton Trust)
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- Ex. 2.31: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 31 to 34 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
- Ex. 2.32: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 14 to 16 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
- Ex. 2.33: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 41 to 45 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
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- Ex. 2.41: *Sonata quasi fantasia* (1948) – bars 200 to 210 (unpublished)
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- Ex. 3.3: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton) – movement 1, bars 50 to 53 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
- Ex. 3.4: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 2, bars 1 to 12 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
- Ex. 3.5: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton) – movement 1, bars 196 to 201 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
- Ex. 3.6: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 2, bars 1 to 11 (Novello and Co. Ltd)
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Ex. 4.2: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 8 to 22 (Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd)

Ex. 4.3: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 241 to 244 (Novello and Co. Ltd)

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# Introduction

## Part One: The Development of Kenneth Leighton's Musical Style from 1929-1960

I have been aware of the music of Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988) since my childhood. As a chorister in the Choir of Wakefield Cathedral – where Leighton himself was a treble in the choir – I frequently heard and performed a number of his organ and choral works. As with so many people, my introduction to Leighton as a composer was through these genres associated with the Church, but I was soon to discover there was much more to Leighton's musical output. I first heard a work of his that that belonged to neither of these genres towards the end of 1993, *Animal Heaven* Opus 80, shortly after the fifth anniversary of Leighton's death and performed, appropriately, in the Reid Concert Hall at the University of Edinburgh. This performance was part of a concert in which I took part as a member of Wakefield Cathedral Choir, which also coincided with the founding of the Kenneth Leighton Trust, instigated by his widow, Josephine Leighton. I was particularly struck by the performance of *Animal Heaven*, mostly because of the unusual ensemble of instruments for which it was composed: solo soprano, recorder, cello and harpsichord. The performance remained in my memory and marks the beginning of my interest in the subject that has grown since then.

When considering a possible focus for postgraduate study, it did not take long to come to the decision to delve further into Leighton's music. My first intention was to include many more of the works than are found in the finished thesis. It quickly became evident,



however, that this would not be possible, for this kind of study, and I realised I would have to narrow it down to a specific period in Leighton's career as a composer. At that point I had been looking in some depth at his early manuscripts and works, and had found that there was much to be observed in studying the developmental aspect of his style contained in these formative compositions.

In taking the study up to the end of 1959, shortly after Leighton's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, I do not mean to imply that his development was entirely complete and that he progressed no further in his creative activities after this date. Despite this, it seemed a natural point at which to stop and this was not a particularly difficult decision to approach. By this point in his career, Leighton was established and known as a composer in Britain. Towards the end of the 1950s his music had received a number of important performances in London (in particular at the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts) and important festivals, including the Cheltenham and Three Choirs Festivals. Commissions were also in plentiful supply, a number of these coming from the BBC. Leighton had also won awards, including a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and the Mendelssohn Scholarship. By the end of 1959, his works were also being published regularly by Novello, the most significant publisher of music in Britain at that time. He was also married, with two children, and settled in regular employment at the University of Edinburgh.

In general, I intended to deliberately avoid those works that might be considered as the most popular of Leighton's music, i.e. the choral and organ works. The main focus of his early work as a composer is to be found in the orchestral, piano, chamber and instrumental

genres. These works, in my opinion, are often of much more value and significance in his compositional output than those works of his that are mainly performed in churches. This is not to say that his choral and organ music is in any way insignificant, but the main difference to be observed is that many of these early compositions are completely reflective of his personal urges as a composer rather than as a response to a particular commission.

I have divided the thesis into five chapters, each of which corresponds to a period in Leighton's life that are linked to the various locations central to his development. The first chapter provides background information on Leighton's childhood, and a survey of his compositions and early musical language from the earliest recorded and surviving manuscript, up until the point he left school. As most of these works include the piano, either on its own or with one instrument or voice, I have considered this body of youthful works as a whole.

The four remaining chapters chart Leighton's life, compositions and musical development in a different way. Similar to the first chapter there is a section of biographical material, which is supported by tables that demonstrate Leighton's patterns of composition. Correspondence, as well as various writings by Leighton himself, those close to him, and those who came in contact with him, are all included in creating a picture of his life and music from each period. This is further enhanced with an element of reception history; reviews and opinions on his compositions are cited, compared and contrasted. The later portion of each of these chapters is formed of prose analysis divided into specific genres and illustrated with musical examples.

In looking at Leighton's developing stylistic features and maturing musical language, reception history is extremely valuable. He collected all reviews, both positive and negative, and glued each short article into a book of cuttings, which range from reviews and mentions in the national press to local press and speciality press (such as the *Musical Times*, *Music and Letters* and *Musical Opinion*). The fact that he read and collected almost every detail of his career that was published in this way is significant, and it cannot have failed to have had an impact at some level on his direction as a composer. It may, of course, have strengthened his resolve in some areas, but it would also be understandable for it to have swayed his opinion and perhaps even his practices in some ways.

In the prose analysis, I have tended to concentrate more on those works that are published, and readily available, rather than those that are not. The published works are mostly of a higher standard than those that remain in manuscript, although this is not universally the case: with works such as the *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26, one of Leighton's stronger works from this period, the logistical difficulties of performances may have been considered prohibitive, resulting in it remaining unpublished to this day.

The musical examples in the analysis section of each chapter are there to provide further lucidity to each point I have made about particular stylistic features and progressions. I have made them as brief and concise as possible to illustrate each point.



Finally, where there are quotations in the text, each is referenced with a footnote. In the interests of clarity, I have used full footnote references throughout, as the nature of much of the material quoted from is difficult to abbreviate.

## **Part 2: A Catalogue of Kenneth Leighton's Compositions from 1929 to 1988**

This complete catalogue of Leighton's compositions started life as a complete list of works, with dates of composition, which was originally intended to serve as an appendix to this thesis. I was inspired to expand it further following the publication in 2004 of *Kenneth Leighton: A Bio-Bibliography* by Carolyn Smith (published by the American company Praeger). This book contained a short biography, a catalogue of works, a discography and a selected list of articles on, and reviews of, Leighton's music. The catalogue section of the book was unfortunately far from complete and the detail contained in it was scant and frequently incorrect. I determined from this that there was room, and indeed a need, for me to correct as many of Smith's errors as I could, as well as creating a document that would present as much detail as was available on each of Leighton's known works.

The catalogue begins with three lists of the entire works: the first is a chronological list split into genres, the second a chronological list split into the years of composition, and the third an alphabetical list. Each genre is then allocated a category number that act as chapters (listed in the contents page), and the main entries of each work are listed in their respective genre in chronological order, being given an individual catalogue reference number made up of the specific category number followed by the number of the work in the category, in the pattern 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc.

Each catalogue entry has a number of subdivisions, the number of which depends on the genre. All the subdivisions used are as follows: 'composition date', 'published', 'MS.', 'scoring', 'text', 'dramatis personae', 'dedication', 'length', 'first performance' and 'notes'. Each category apart from 'text' and 'dramatis personae' is found in the entry for every work.

The 'composition date' entry aims to give the most accurate dates of composition for each work, with the month and year of beginning and completion, where known. The 'published' field gives details of the work's publisher or if it remains unpublished. The 'MS.' entry provides the location and details of existing manuscripts as well as specific descriptions of what remains – this is also the only record of what exactly is contained in the Kenneth Leighton Archive held in Special Collections at the University of Edinburgh Library. The 'scoring' field details the resources required for each work in abbreviation form. The 'text' entry lists the authors of any texts used by Leighton in his works. The 'dramatis personae' field is used in only one genre, opera, to list the characters and their voice parts. The 'dedication' field gives details of the commission of the work and the dedication of a work to an individual or group. The entry for 'length' details the length in minutes (or hours) of each work, where this is known, and the number of bars in each movement or work. The 'first performance' entry attempts to give complete details of first known performances, the location of the performance, and details of the performers. Finally the 'notes' entry gives any further details known on the work, such as programme notes written by Leighton and other points of interest about a particular work.

## Sources

Throughout the writing of this thesis and the compiling of the catalogue I have attempted to use a wide variety of sources. The main resources in this kind of study are always going to be the composer's works and I have made full use of these where possible, whether in manuscript or published editions. A selection of his unpublished manuscripts was for a time misplaced: they had been borrowed from the collection and were recovered shortly before the completion of my thesis. Access has therefore been limited to these manuscripts, which were mostly of unpublished works written between the years 1952 to 1954. Using the manuscripts themselves has proved at times difficult and frustrating as the Library of the University of Edinburgh have not yet catalogued the collection and the manuscripts are not kept in any particular order.

In confirming and discovering further details about each work, I have used a number of different sources, the main ones being Leighton's composition books, in which he detailed the majority of his compositions. The bulk of details about each of his compositions are available between the three composition books and the manuscripts. Programmes and programme notes, some of which are written by Leighton himself, give many opportunities for extra details to be completed and a more complete picture to be obtained. As already stated, criticisms, opinions and comments are also a vital resource. Other than this there is little published information on Kenneth Leighton and the only single volume (Smith's Bio-Bibliography) cannot unfortunately be relied upon. Leighton's friends, family and

acquaintances provide the bulk of the remaining information, and all have been extremely generous and helpful, displaying a real affection for both the man and his music.

# Chapter One

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## Wakefield, 1929-1947

When Kenneth Leighton died Britain lost one of its finest contemporary composers, who never received in his lifetime quite the recognition he was due. He died at the peak of his powers, and I have no doubt that we have been deprived of some enriching music [...]<sup>1</sup>

With Leighton's death at the somewhat premature age of 58 after a relatively short illness, the extent of his work as a composer was considerable in a large variety of genres including one opera, three symphonies, a number of concertos as well as much chamber, instrumental and choral music. It is a little unfortunate that he is now mostly remembered as a composer of music for the Church and the organ. While there are many fine pieces of sacred and organ music, these works alone cannot do justice to his output as a whole. Towards the end of his life, and while he still enjoyed writing music for the Church, Leighton was quickly reaching the conclusion that he had written his share of sacred music and had resolved not to accept any more commissions for music of this genre.<sup>2</sup> In his own composition book he noted 'my last setting of the mass' by the entry for the *Missa Christi* in March 1988; indeed he was only to write one more piece of Church music, *The Beauty of Holiness* (April 1988), which was incidentally also the last completed work entered in his own record of compositions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., Kenneth Leighton: *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra Op. 31 – Symphony No. 3*, (Gramophone magazine, October, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.

<sup>3</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composition Book No. 3*, (unpublished).



Composing music for the Church may have come naturally to Leighton as some of his earliest musical experiences and training were as a chorister in the choir of Wakefield Cathedral, clearly an influence of some importance. Leighton is often quoted as saying:

Any natural composer is the product of his background, experience and training, and I like to think that my music has the characteristic Yorkshire qualities, which have been described (with reference to my music) as ‘vigour, forthrightness and emotionalism tempered by common sense’.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to consider what Leighton means by a ‘natural composer’ in the above quote from an article written in 1975. The dictionary definition of ‘natural’ in this sense of the word is ‘a person with an innate gift or talent for a particular task or activity’.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps Leighton is implying here that a natural composer has to be born with inbuilt capabilities to write music – composing is not an art form that can be entirely taught, rather an ability to be nurtured and nourished. It is imperative then to discover how Leighton’s own talents were noticed and developed over time to make him into a respected composer of international repute, and which would eventually lead to this statement in his obituary in *The Musical Times*: ‘[His] traditional views stressed the importance of communication and craftsmanship rather than dry theory [...] Above all, he was a modest sincere man who won great respect and affection’.<sup>6</sup>

Kenneth Leighton was born in Wakefield in the West Riding of Yorkshire on 2 October 1929. His father, Thomas Leighton, was a male nurse in a local mental hospital and his

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<sup>4</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composing To-day* from *Twenty British Composers* (Ed. Dickinson, Peter), (London: Chester Music for the Feeney Trust, 1975), 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Pearsall, Judy (Ed.), *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Tenth Edition, Revised*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 950.

<sup>6</sup> Anon., *Obituary: Kenneth Leighton*, (*The Musical Times*, Vol. 129, No. 1749, November 1988).

mother, Florence Dixon,<sup>7</sup> was a talented needle worker.<sup>8</sup> Leighton also had an older brother, Donald. Leighton's first formal education between 1937 and 1940 was at Holy Trinity Boys' School in Wakefield, where early signs of his musical ability were noticed. A temporary headmaster of the school during Leighton's time there, Henry Hodgkiss, wrote in 1989:

I remember him very well at school, accompanying assembly. School pianos in those days were unpredictable, both in touch and tune, and the piano stool which also served as the teacher's high chair presented a problem. However when at last duly elevated, Kenneth had no difficulty in coping and, I suspect, secretly enjoyed the challenge of sight reading.<sup>9</sup>

Hodgkiss continues in his letter describing "Their home – an unpretentious terraced house [...] provided a haven of peace and stability".<sup>10</sup> This home talked about by Hodgkiss was at 21 Denstone Street, and consisted of four rooms, two on each floor of the house, which was a home for the family of four.<sup>11</sup> When placed alongside most of his musical and composer contemporaries, or near contemporaries, it is strikingly evident how unlikely – and also somewhat refreshing – it is that a composer of this stature should be a product of this type of background. Leighton was unprivileged where status, musical education and surroundings were concerned. Brought up in the north of England in the 1930s and during the years of the Second World War, where exposure to the arts would have been much more limited – although not non-existent – than in the distinctly more prosperous south, his humble circumstances did not detract from his development as a musician and

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas died in 1979, and Florence Dixon some six years earlier in 1973.

<sup>8</sup> Hodgkiss, Henry, correspondence with Dennis Townhill, (13 February 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton. At the time of writing plans are afoot to have a blue plaque placed on the front of the house, which still stands, containing details of when Leighton lived there.



composer. In fact, he would have had the advantage of being actively encouraged to pursue a career that was not viewed as beneath him, a problem that had affected a number of British composers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. On the other hand, he never had the luxury of a source of private income or a large inheritance, which would have allowed him to become a purely full-time composer. In reference to Leighton, Christopher Finzi has written of how a underprivileged background combined with a creative mind could produce difficulties:

People with exceptional gifts (and I have no doubt that Kenneth had incomprehensible musical talent) are by the very nature of their genius often disadvantaged by imbalance. Extraordinary development in one direction alongside complete ordinariness in other fields doesn't make for an easy life. And as we all tend to play our strongest suite, so the rift tends to increase as they develop [...] I don't think there is an easy answer to the problem, and all one can do is welcome the extraordinary gift and hope that the rest sorts itself out. There is often a great temptation to interfere with the status quo, but my experience is that there is a certain inbuilt destiny to the conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In September 1940 at the age of ten, he enrolled in Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Wakefield (QEGS) on a scholarship, where he attended until leaving school in 1947.<sup>13</sup> QEGS was one of the finest grammar schools in the area and was particularly long-established having been founded by the instigation of the local Savile family in 1591 by a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I. A teacher of history at the school from the 1930s (and later the Second Master), Ronald Chapman, wrote some detailed reminiscences of Leighton's time at QEGS:

I remember Kenneth when he arrived in 1939 as I was his former master. He was a very neat, quiet, pink and white little boy with flaming hair. He was a scholarship boy of

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<sup>12</sup> Finzi, Christopher, correspondence with Adam Binks (12 June 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, school record for Kenneth Leighton (1940-1947), contained in the QEGS Archive.



very humble parentage. His home was in a rather dismal part of the city near the gasworks. His mother and father were devoted to his welfare but intellectually modest and indeed bewildered by the obvious attainments of the boy they had produced. They depended on and were grateful for the advice which was poured out for them and him over the forthcoming years from many sources.<sup>14</sup>

Lawrence Dewitt – who interviewed Leighton extensively in 1973, while researching for a thesis on Leighton’s organ music – states that he ‘began composing at the age of eight simply to write down his improvisations at the piano’.<sup>15</sup> Probably the most significant of his early musical experiences though, were as a chorister in Wakefield Cathedral from 1937 until 1942.<sup>16</sup> The organist of the cathedral during this time was Newell Wallbank, who ‘[...] was becoming an important influence on the cathedral musical standards [...] he] specialized in quality boys training’.<sup>17</sup>

**Illustration 1.i:** Photograph of Kenneth Leighton in his Wakefield Cathedral Choir robes in 1941



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<sup>14</sup> Hodgkiss, Henry, correspondence with Dennis Townhill, (13 February 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Dewitt, Lawrence, *Kenneth Leighton: His Life and Solo Compositions for Organ*, (Dissertation Indiana, 1976), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Bielby, Jonathan, correspondence with Adam Binks, (9 February 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Copley, Jack, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (1 January 2002). Jack Copley is a former lay-clerk of the Choir of Wakefield Cathedral and the letter states that he was a ‘young baritone in the choir when Kenneth’s talents were becoming evident’.



The cathedral at Wakefield had made the transition from large parish church to mother church of the newly formed diocese of Wakefield only some fifty years earlier on 17 May 1888 – the Order of Council to create the bishopric was signed by Queen Victoria. Here Leighton found himself in an very supportive and understanding environment, which most certainly contributed to helping him onto the path of a musical career. Indeed, the provost of the cathedral during Leighton's time there as a chorister, Noel Hopkins, was '[...] a lover of Bach and a considerable amateur pianist and took the greatest interest in Kenneth's musical progress'.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Ronald Chapman details further how Leighton was not particularly enthused or interested in sports or other similar distractions from his musical and academic studies. Instead, he invested all his efforts in education and '[...he] imbibed not only the music of Stanford and co. but also the great Elizabethans – Byrd, Tallis etc.'<sup>19</sup>, which were prove to be vital influences on him and more especially on the early part of his career as a composer in forming a personal musical style.

At this particular point in the history of Anglican Church music, the quality and range of the cathedral repertoire was not nearly as large or diverse as it had become towards the end of the twentieth century. The exact records of the liturgical music sung at Wakefield Cathedral when Leighton was a chorister are unfortunately lost. Leighton himself in various sources gives us some idea of the repertoire, which serves to back up the national survey of cathedral repertoire conducted in 1938. This survey, in which Wakefield Cathedral sadly did not take part, lists specific works and the percentage of institutions that performed each

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<sup>18</sup> Chapman, Ronald, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (3 February 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

work.<sup>20</sup> It indicates a general repertoire of composers that were part of, or a product of, what is known as the British Musical Renaissance such as Charles Villiers Stanford, John Ireland, Basil Harwood, C. Hubert H. Parry and Charles Wood as well as a staple diet of earlier Victorian composers such as John Stainer and John Goss. The rediscovery and restoration onto the cathedral music lists of Renaissance composers such as William Byrd, Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Tallis, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, and Tomás Luis de Victoria, was also becoming evident; the work of various editors and scholars from Stainer and John West, through to bastions of early music editing such as Richard Terry, former organist of Westminster Cathedral, was becoming fairly widespread by this point in time. According to Leighton himself, from a speech given at an annual general meeting of the Wakefield Cathedral Old Choristers' Association, the repertoire of the cathedral choir was typically wide ranging and complete at that time:

[...] we sang some Palestrina, we sang the old favourites – Noble in B minor, Walmisley in D minor, and Stanford. And we also sang what was then the latest thing, – Darke in F – a most exciting experience – Warlock carols, and even a piece of Britten which I didn't like very much because it seemed so outrageously modern and cacophonous.<sup>21</sup>

Leighton was clearly gaining a substantial insight into most aspects of British choral music up to that point when he was still at an impressionable age. Referring to his days as a chorister in a different lecture, he also talks about the varied repertoire and refers to some of the early choral works of Herbert Howells, who was 'one of my heroes'.<sup>22</sup> In several other lectures he also refers to his cathedral experiences and how important it was to his

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<sup>20</sup> Patton, John, *A Century of Cathedral Music 1989-1998*, (Winchester: John Patton, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, from a talk given to Wakefield Cathedral Old Chorister's Association, (unpublished, date unknown).

<sup>22</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, from an unpublished lecture, (unpublished, date unknown).



musical development in later life. The following quotation is from a talk given on BBC Radio in 1979 near the occasion of Leighton's fiftieth birthday:

It is a well known fact that our earliest experiences in childhood are crucial in life, and I am sure that this is true in music as in all else. I had the great good fortune to be a cathedral chorister and I am sure that this is still the best early musical education to be found in this country.<sup>23</sup>

In another lecture he refers to his first attempts at composing, stating how his early experiences were:

A constant source of stimulus and inspiration which in the end drove one to the desire to do something of one's own, and to explore the incredibly rich and powerful possibilities presented by a blank page of musical paper.<sup>24</sup>

To begin with, Leighton's earliest attempts at composing and his musical style were derived from the works of other composers and he imitated and borrowed a number of stylistic elements:

And so at the age of ten I attempted to compose a symphony impelled by my first experiences of Beethoven [...] Later on I attempted to write fugues and toccatas, impelled by my experiences of Bach; and later still I had a go at impressionistic pieces under the influence of Debussy and John Ireland (all this in the teens). In later youth V[aughan] W[illiams], and the music of the English composers of that period was a source of great inspiration.<sup>25</sup>

In his earliest works dating from his time at school, and slightly later works from his university career, the influences of much of this music that Leighton learned during his youth can be clearly seen. Elsewhere he is quoted as saying that the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten and William Walton were great influences to him, but

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<sup>23</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, from a talk given on BBC radio, (26 October 1979).

<sup>24</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *The Meaning of my Work*, (unpublished, date unknown).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

especially that of Walton.<sup>26</sup> As is to be expected, Leighton's early works contain few of the common features and the instantly recognizable style of his more mature works.

Other sources of musical influence and encouragement were not readily available through any formal teaching at QEGS, which is somewhat unusual for a school of this type. Ronald Chapman wrote that:

At the grammar school the arts were almost invisible. The best illustration of this was that one man, Mr Pallett, combined in his person art, music and woodwork. A colleague who disliked him referred to him as 'that bloody carpenter and hurdy-gurdy man'! Music only meant one period a week [...] It was a very happy school and soon both masters and boys realized they had a youngster of remarkable talent and were proud of him. It depended, however, on individual masters to do something about it.<sup>27</sup>

During 1944 Leighton began to receive piano tuition from Sylvia Baggaley, wife of the headmaster of QEGS;<sup>28</sup> she was also his first tutor in composition and counterpoint using standard texts of the time written by Edward Bairstow and Stewart MacPherson.<sup>29</sup> The name of Leighton's earliest music teachers are unknown, but it is probable that he received tuition of some kind before 1944, as he had developed some level of skills at the piano from a primary school age onwards. However, an article in his local newspaper, the Wakefield Express, stated that:

Before starting music lessons at the age of 14 under the tuition of Mrs. E. J. Baggaley, of Wakefield, Kenneth taught himself. He told an "Express" reporter that he wrote his first piano sonata when he was 8 years old'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Dewitt, Lawrence, *Kenneth Leighton: His Life and Solo Compositions for Organ*, (Dissertation Indiana, 1976), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Chapman, Ronald, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (3 February 1995).

<sup>28</sup> E.J. Baggaley – the husband of Sylvia – commenced teaching at QEGS, having moved to Wakefield with his family, in 1941.

<sup>29</sup> Dewitt, Lawrence, *Kenneth Leighton: His Life and Solo Compositions for Organ*, (Dissertation Indiana, 1976), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Anon., *Young Composer*, (Wakefield Express, date unknown).

Sylvia Baggaley had previously studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London (RAM) with Claude Pollard and had relinquished a career as a professional pianist in order to get married and to raise a family. Leighton progressed quickly at the piano and he himself became a pupil of Pollard at the RAM – more than likely through Sylvia Baggaley – under whose tuition he attained a Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (L.R.A.M.) diploma in piano performance while still at school, at the age of 16. While at the University of Oxford, Leighton was to continue to study the piano with Pollard at the RAM.

Aside from his time as a cathedral chorister and his piano lessons, a very strong influence on Leighton's early development was the encouragement of his teacher Ronald Chapman and a friend of his, Fred Booth, a biology master at Rothwell Grammar School (near Wakefield) from 1939. Chapman and Booth shared lodgings together between 1939 and 1941 and later from 1946 for a few years – Fred Booth was called up for national service between these two periods.<sup>31</sup> Chapman was secretary of the Leeds Philharmonic Society and regularly allowed boys from QEGS free entrance into concerts at Leeds Town Hall if they were to sell programmes at the door – it is more than possible that Leighton would have taken full advantage of this opportunity. Chapman also had an extensive record collection of various styles of music, which complemented Booth's comprehensive collection of music scores, many of which were first editions, which he later bequeathed to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Contained in both of these collections was the music of several major twentieth-century composers, including some of the most innovative of the time:

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<sup>31</sup> Chapman, Ronald, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (3 February 1995).



[...] Kenneth (and others) came to our digs. Here I believe we introduced Kenneth to many twentieth century composers and especially Stravinsky, Bartók, and Britten, about whom we were both besotted. Kenneth would come regularly and listen and play (e.g. duos like Milhaud's *Scaramouche*) and borrow.<sup>32</sup>

Carrying on in his letter, Chapman goes on to say how he regularly worked music into his teaching of history and often played music by composers as diverse as Giuseppe Verdi and Kurt Weill to his pupils in order to help illustrate specific moments in history.<sup>33</sup> Leighton also referred to various composers whose music he became acquainted with at this time, which included the composers in the above quotation as well as names such as Arnold Schoenberg and Edward Macdowell.<sup>34</sup> These facts are particularly significant in charting Leighton's development as a composer. The fact that he was introduced to composers of serial music as early as this in his development is not widely-appreciated. The general opinion is that his exposure to this music came while studying with Gofredo Petrassi in Rome following graduation from Oxford, but this suggests an awareness of serialism and its proponents much earlier. The depth at which he was introduced to this music is, of course, not clear and it may be doubtful that Chapman or Booth could have taught the young Leighton much about the intricacies of the techniques employed, although his interest in serial techniques can be traced back further than is generally thought.

There are several accounts from school contemporaries of Leighton performing music before morning school assembly at QEGS. One of these states that he often performed music from memory – this may or may not have been performances of his own

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.



compositions – and others tell us that he would often perform with other pupils either as an accompanist or as a duet partner at the piano.<sup>35</sup> Another former pupil of QEGS, John Oates, wrote how he realised that ‘[...] the recitals he gave as a schoolboy were probably his own compositions, as I remember admiring the fact that there was never a sheet of music in front of him when the wonderful sounds came from the grand piano.’<sup>36</sup> Specific composers and pieces of music that he performed included some substantial and somewhat challenging works by such composers as Sergei Rachmaninov, Walton (specifically *Façade* for piano duet) and Ernst von Dohnányi (Rhapsody in C).<sup>37</sup> David McCarthy, a contemporary of Leighton’s at QEGS wrote the following reminiscences:

[...] I] have the clearest memories of him – long (for those days!) sandy hair, brushed back; aristocratic features; fascinating hands – especially his long fingers; kind, tolerant, genial manner.

My first awareness of his outstanding pianistic talent was his performance of Dohnanyi’s [sic] Rhapsody in C at a Prize (Speech) Day ceremony. It was absolutely breath-taking and left an indelible impression. I also recall his performing his own violin sonata with a great friend of mine, Peter Dews. I was so taken with it that I persuaded Peter to “lend” me the score. I think Kenneth was passing through his “post-Rachmaninov” period at this time!

My greatest pleasure, however, was to share as a duettist with Kenneth items from Walton’s “Façade” suite arranged for piano duet. I still glow at the memory! I think the performance was instigated by Ronald Chapman, to whom so many of us owed so much.<sup>38</sup>

Leighton’s school record from his time at QEGS is still extant and details a very successful school life, being either at the top of his class or very close to it in each year. The school record also notes passes in nine subjects of the School Certificate Examination from July

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<sup>35</sup> McCarthy, David, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (9 August 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Oates, John, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (3 May 1996).

<sup>37</sup> McCarthy, David, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (9 August 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

1944, including Music and Latin – which were both graded as ‘very good’ – alongside English Language, History and French. In July of 1946 the school record again details passes in the Higher School Certificate Examination and the Scholarship Examinations taken in that year. In these Music and Latin are again both prominent gaining distinctions at principal level and ‘excellent’ at scholarship level. As a result Leighton was awarded the State Scholarship, which was later upgraded to the Hastings Scholarship, an open award to study at the University of Oxford.<sup>39</sup> Leighton commenced his study of Classics in the autumn term of 1947 at The Queen’s College, Oxford.

The first recorded details of Kenneth Leighton’s works are in his three composition books (all entirely in his own handwriting), the first two of which are incomplete. The first and second composition books begin in January 1945; the first one stops in September 1962 and the second one goes a little further to September 1978. The first composition book is at the back of a volume of writings and poetry by the young Leighton and the second is in a volume of its own. The third and only complete composition book also begins in January 1945, and he details, as far as is currently known, most of his compositions (including those withdrawn or now lost) and the month and year in which he worked on each composition. The first listed composition in each of the books is a *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G major*, and was composed in the January and February of 1945. The manuscript of this work survives, as do the majority of his early manuscripts listed in the composition books, but none (as far as is known) of his more youthful pre-1945 works. As there is evidence of works by Leighton from earlier than 1945 in his own writings, it can only be assumed that

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<sup>39</sup> QEGS school record for Kenneth Leighton (1940-1947).

there must have been a point at which he made a conscious decision to discard, and probably even destroy his earlier works, as these are no longer in existence. After this point, however, the majority of works that became discarded were not destroyed by Leighton, and there is no evidence to explain why some redundant works were kept and others disposed of.

Written at the age of 15, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G major* shows Leighton at a very experimental stage in his development as a composer in what is essentially a Romantic work in style and outlook. The sonata is in three movements and is admirably substantial for such an early composition. It is entirely tonal with very little dissonance but occasional shades of chromatic movement within the harmony (Ex. 1.1).

**Ex. 1.1:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G major* (1945) – movement 1, bars 1 to 8

The musical score is for the first movement of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G major*, bars 1 to 8. It is written for violin and piano. The tempo is marked 'Con Moto (Poco Rubato)'. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating G major. The score is in 4/4 time. The violin part (top staff) begins with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, then a half note B4, and a half note C5. The piano part (bottom staff) begins with a half note G2, followed by a half note A2, then a half note B2, and a half note C3. The piano part has a dynamic marking of 'pp' (pianissimo) at the beginning. The violin part has a dynamic marking of 'p' (piano) at the beginning. The piano part has a dynamic marking of 'pp' (pianissimo) at the beginning. The score is written in a standard musical notation with a treble clef for the violin and a bass clef for the piano. The piano part is written in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The violin part is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The piano part is written in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The score is written in a standard musical notation with a treble clef for the violin and a bass clef for the piano. The piano part is written in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The violin part is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The piano part is written in a grand staff with a treble and bass clef.

Overall the sonata is quite reminiscent of Victorian composers – especially composers of Church music, not surprisingly – with a hint of Edward Elgar at his imperial best, displaying



a very strong melodic sense that is found in Elgar's various marches (Ex. 1.2). The piano accompaniment in particular is reminiscent of some of the more straightforward chordal passages in the liturgical music of early Stainer and to an extent Samuel Sebastian Wesley. Leighton attested that early compositions of this kind were heavily influenced by various composers, and it is also very possible that Leighton could have been encouraged by teachers to write in what was, by that stage, a very much pastiche style.

Ex. 1.2: *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1945) – movement 3, bars 13 to 21

At various points in the work Leighton can be seen to be experimenting with different textures in the piano writing as well as fairly standard compositional techniques, such as the sequence. The sonata was written with Peter Dews in mind; a violinist and contemporary of Leighton's at QEGS, Dews performed the slow movement before a school assembly one morning. The rest of the sonata was never performed by Dews, who considered it too difficult for his own technique,<sup>40</sup> and no other performance is known of this work.

<sup>40</sup> Dews, Peter, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (date unknown).



Perhaps also influenced by various British composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the majority of Leighton's works from 1945 to 1946 are songs for voice and piano. Many of these songs make use of writers and some specific texts previously employed by British Romantic composers of importance. The passages of verse used by Leighton are mostly of British authorship and by a broad mixture of Renaissance, eighteenth-century, Victorian and early twentieth-century writers. A comprehensive knowledge of literature, and often a good all-round education, seems to have been a common feature of British composers from this era. Many teachers of composition advocated this type of knowledge of the arts and other subjects in general; indeed Parry in his book *The Art of Music* states his opinion that '[...] though a man's life may not be prolonged, it may be widened and deepened by what he puts into it; and any possibility of bringing people into touch with those highest moments in art in which great ideals were realised'.<sup>41</sup>

The fact that many of the texts Leighton makes use of had been set to music before could indicate some knowledge of English song as well as of literature. One of the best-known texts Leighton draws upon is *Sea Fever*, the words by John Masefield, which was of course most famously immortalised by John Ireland. Among other texts used by Leighton and set by significant British composers, *I will make you brooches* (set by Vaughan Williams in *Songs of Travel*), *The Grasshopper* and *Go lovely rose* (both set by Parry) are prominent.

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<sup>41</sup> Parry, C. Hubert H., *The Art of Music*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co. Ltd, 1894).

Leighton's catalogue of early songs begins with three songs written in July 1945 at the age of 15: *So we'll go no more a roving* (Lord Byron), *Golden slumbers* (anon.) and *I vow to thee my country* (Cecil Spring-Rice), which are listed in this order in the final composition book. There is one song listed as composed in June 1945, *Twilight*, the manuscript of which is sadly lost along with a later piano piece, *Étude in F*, which is listed under October 1945. The majority of Leighton's early songs are noted in the treble clef suggesting they are to be performed by a high voice, but some are comfortably possible for lower voices; the majority of the songs still extant in manuscript do not specify a voice type.

Over the remainder of 1945 Leighton wrote seven more songs listed in the following order: *Sea Fever* (John Masefield), *To Daisies* (Robert Herrick), *Where go the boats?* (Robert Louis Stevenson), *Time you old gypsy man* (Ralph Hodgson), *The Cow* (Stevenson), *A Good Boy* (Stevenson) and *Daffodils* (William Wordsworth). These early attempts are all similar in style and layout. They are mostly strophic according to the stanzas of the poetry with one or two examples of through-composed songs, which on the whole contain more musical ideas and interest; this is particularly evident in *To Daisies*. The length of the songs does not deviate a great deal; he mostly chooses fairly short poetry of typically one or two stanzas, nothing of great substance or depth that would be particularly challenging to set to music. Despite these features though, the songs do inevitably progress in standard and quality over time; this is understandably most noticeable in the piano writing where Leighton was already extremely competent as a player. The accompaniments of the songs increasingly become an integral part of the pieces; Leighton discovers how word painting can be enhanced with the close involvement of the piano, rather than playing a mere supporting role. A gradual

transition into a more mature style of piano writing can clearly be seen, with a reduction in basic chordal writing and progressively more taxing parts for the pianist.

All of the early songs listed in Leighton's composition books are very straightforward harmonically speaking, but also extremely competent; they reflect a sound traditional training and knowledge of traditional harmony. A lot of the writing is closely tied to the tonic or dominant of the key at first, with little exploration into related (or unrelated) keys; most of the harmonic interest is created by chromatic inflections or movement – parallel fifths are at this stage certainly not a feature found in these youthful works. The songs are mostly divided into regular four bar phrases with little repetition of the words; at times they can become a little hymn-like. This becomes extremely prominent in *I vow to thee my country*, which suggests a possible familiarity with the two well known settings of this text by Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst (Ex. 1.3).

Ex. 1.3: *I vow to thee my country* (1945) – bars 1 to 8

The musical score for 'I vow to thee my country' (bars 1 to 8) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the Voice and Piano parts. The Voice part is in G major, 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of 'Allegro Nobilmente' and a 'rall.' section. The Piano part is in G major, 4/4 time, with a tempo marking of 'Allegro Nobilmente' and a 'rall.' section. The second system shows the Voice and Piano parts with the lyrics 'vow to thee my coun - try all earth - ly things a bove'. The tempo marking 'A tempo' is present at the end of the system.

This song is remarkably similar in form and layout to Parry's setting of *Jerusalem*, the hymn by William Blake, which is perhaps a further sign of the influence of Leighton's background



in Church music. His ability to write very naturally and appropriately for the voice is also a strong indicator of his choral background. His vocal writing usually makes good sense of the text with sensible underlay and an affinity with speech rhythm in vocal music that avoids unnecessary stress or accent on unimportant syllables.

The vocal line in most of the songs appears to be very comfortable for the singer, with the intervals and vocal range never particularly presenting any problems. Despite these things, however, it is unclear as to whether or not most of these songs would have received a performance at any point, especially given the fact that they are very youthful works and, while being very competent essays, they are not in Leighton's personal and recognisable style, and really just pastiche at best.

During 1946, while Leighton's song writing can be seen to progress further, there is much more advancement and interest to be found in his music for solo piano. Through this medium he was now beginning to experiment much more widely with colours and techniques, applying his own already considerable skills as a player of the instrument to his composition. The piano works from 1946 are inevitably more extended than the songs up to this point, with the length not being determined (or restricted) by a text. Similar to the songs, however, they are generally Romantic in influence and approach, and they generally convey Leighton's sound piano performance technique and a clear knowledge of the instrument. From 1946, there is one piano work listed in the composition books, written during July 1946, *Rhapsody*, the manuscript of which is sadly missing.



*Remembrance* for piano, written in June 1946, is a prime example of Leighton's developmental features, while the manuscript in particular demonstrates his use of very detailed articulation, expression and dynamic markings at an early juncture. A fondness for rich textures is evident from this early point in his development and whilst Leighton retains general Romantic features in *Remembrance*, the style could almost be classed as a little Impressionist in some of the musical language. In fact, it may well be one of the Impressionist style pieces he attempted in his youth, which he mentioned in his writings quoted above – a particular indicator of Leighton's Impressionist tendencies can be seen in the subtle use of the whole-tone scale (Ex. 1.4).

Ex. 1.4: *Remembrance* (1946) – bars 96 to 101



Subsequent piano works from 1946 also include some of his experimental features but hints towards important factors of his mature style are now beginning to become evident, for instance in his *Movement in D minor* and his *Impromptu* (both from August 1946). In both these early piano works, a dramatic and slow-moving lyrical technique, which is customary in a good deal of his later works, begins to be seen, but particularly in the opening and concluding sections of the *Impromptu* (Ex. 1.5).

Ex. 1.5: *Impromptu* (1946) – bars 1 to 12

Moderato con moto Poco Rubato  
Cantabile e legato molto con espressione

Piano

Pno.

Also in the *Impromptu*, there is evidence of an increased use of dissonance, which Leighton marks very obviously into the score, requiring some form of accent or emphasis at points of particular discord in the music. Dissonance at this stage in Leighton's music is infrequent and can almost become an event within the score – a distinct contrast from the musical language of subsequent works.

Alongside the development of his piano music during 1946, Leighton also managed to write seven more songs in the first half of the year: *The West Wind*, *Roadways*, *It is good to be out on the road* and *Beauty* (all by John Masefield); *Oh! Breathe not his name* (Thomas Moore); *Requiem* and *I will make you brooches* (both by Robert Louis Stevenson). Closely resembling the songs written during 1945, these are all of a comparatively standard short length. In spite of this they do show a particular sustained progression in compositional technique, and a certain flair for song writing but still very much in a pastiche approach (Ex. 1.6 and 1.7).

Ex 1.6: *Roadways* (1946) – bars 1 to 12

Musical score for *Roadways* (1946), bars 1 to 12. The score is in 8/8 time and consists of two systems. The first system features a Voice part and a Piano part. The Voice part begins with a 'Moderato con moto' tempo marking and a 'p a tempo (freely)' dynamic marking. The Piano part starts with a 'p' dynamic. The second system features a Violin (V) part and a Piano (Pno.) part. The Violin part includes a 'cresc.' marking and a '(rall. un poco)' marking. The Piano part also includes a 'cresc.' marking. The lyrics for the Voice part are: 'One road leads to Lon-don, a tempo' and 'One road leads to Wales My road leads me sea-wards To the white dip-ping sails'.

Ex 1.7: *I will make you brooches* (1946) – bars 1 to 6

Musical score for *I will make you brooches* (1946), bars 1 to 6. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system features a Voice part and a Piano part. The Voice part begins with a 'Con moto (freely)' tempo marking and a 'poco rall.' marking. The Piano part starts with a 'p' dynamic. The second system features a Violin (V) part and a Piano (Pno.) part. The Violin part includes a 'poco rall.' marking. The Piano part also includes a 'poco rall.' marking. The lyrics for the Voice part are: 'I will make you brooch-es and toys for your de-light of bird - song at morn - ing and star - shone at night.'

Leighton's earliest known attempt at using musical forces larger than piano and voice, piano and violin or piano solo, was composed in November of 1946 in the form of a *Festival Overture* for strings and piano. This particular work is noted in the composition book as



written for the Wakefield Pageant of Youth, and could have been one of the earliest public performances of his music. This work is mentioned in correspondence from Ronald Chapman to Josephine Leighton:

Another example of Kenneth's versatility was an overture he composed for the Festival of Youth Clubs in January 1947 at the Wakefield Opera House in the first week of the Great Freeze. It was based on a book on Wakefield's history by Sammy and Edith Waters [...] Sammy was careers master at QEGS [...] <sup>42</sup>

The *Festival Overture* abundantly uses bold recurring themes as it neatly follows a format of episodes with bridging passages. It is a somewhat grand work and is almost quintessentially British in the same manner as the earlier *Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major* of January 1945 and most of his songs. Grand, soaring, broad and often lyrical melodies are found alongside some seemingly modal elements, which bring to mind the music of Vaughan Williams, who was a significant influence on Leighton's early works (Ex. 1.8).

Ex. 1.8: *Festival Overture* (1946) – bars 34 to 39

The image shows a musical score for four parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cellos and Bases. The tempo is marked 'Cantabile' and the dynamic is 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of 6 measures. The Violin I and Violin II parts have a melodic line with some grace notes. The Viola part has a more rhythmic, arpeggiated pattern. The Cellos and Bases part has a similar arpeggiated pattern. The double bass is marked 'ad lib.' (ad libitum).

The greatest leap forward not only in Leighton's solo piano music but in his compositions as a whole is to be found in the *Sonatina No. 1 for Piano* Opus 1a. It was the first of his works

<sup>42</sup> Chapman, Ronald, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton, (3 February 1995).



to be allocated an opus number and was composed in December 1946 at the age of 17. While still relying to a large extent on his early musical environment and experiences; this piece shows elements of some of the major contemporary English composers and contains some of the bold harmonic movement one would perhaps expect from Vaughan Williams or Holst, but also the lyricism of Finzi and a little of the harmonic inventiveness of Howells. It also shows elements derivative of mid-to-late Romantic piano music, presumably an influence gained from his piano studies of a wide range of composers. These aspects are quite successfully blended with a deeply rooted English Romantic idiom.

Certain features of importance in Leighton's music had by now emerged as his own musical fingerprints began to become perceptible; once again the inclusion of greatly detailed and precise instructions for performance – including articulation, phrasing and dynamics – indicate his ideas on how each piece should be realised and give substantial help and indication of his intentions within the music. Another prominent feature that one can begin to observe is the frequent lack of a key signature; this is a very common trait in most of his later works, from his student days onwards. In the *Sonatina No. 1* the two outer movements do not have a key signature and are not particularly in a key that requires this (i.e. C major or A minor) – the absence of a key signature aids in the scoring of the extensive harmonic progress through a large variety of different keys, at the same time never becoming tied down to one particular key as the tonic of the movement. This practice requires many more accidentals throughout the score instead of a frequently changing key signature, which has to be kept track of. The option to leave out the key signature that Leighton chose is arguably easier for the performer to read.

The *Sonatina No.1* is in a traditional fast-slow-fast three-movement arrangement. The layout of this work in the score suggests only the slightest of gaps in between the movements. This concise and compact piano piece is a somewhat bold statement of Leighton's developing style and is importantly full of contrasts, which add many interesting and varied colours to the music. The most noticeable feature at the beginning of each movement is an ostinato figuration (different in each movement), which is introduced in the left hand in the opening two bars, joined in bar three by the first theme in the right hand.

The first movement is full of tension from the opening bar, which Leighton cleverly increases and relieves through the use of dynamics and the different textures and areas of the piano. There is an immediate introduction of dissonance from the first bar onwards creating a dark and thoughtful mood to the piece (Ex. 1.9).

Ex. 1.9: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 1, bars 1 to 12

*Allegretto con molto*

The suggested key at the start is D minor (with dissonance provided by a recurring E flat) but this is followed quite shortly by some striking key changes, mostly to unrelated keys, for instance the key of E major is introduced in bar 32 providing a somewhat more pleasant

contrast, which develops into C major by bar 40. The music then goes through more interesting key changes with a few hints of bitonality, creating a very subtle yet not unpleasant or harsh sense of dissonance. From bar 49 of this movement the contrast between his use of the whole-tone scale and chromatic movement can be clearly heard inside the left hand melody (and eventually in the right hand) and the chromatic shifts between A minor and A flat minor. Amongst all this, crescendos, diminuendos and sudden changes in the dynamics help to heighten the anxiety within the movement. This happens more frequently as the first movement progresses. A contrast also appears in the articulation between the two hands, the right hand accompanying a left hand legato melody with staccato chords (bars 48-64) and vice versa (bars 65-75).

The first movement is made up of two major themes, both of which are used in different ways each time they recur to heighten tension and introduce the various climaxes that appear in this section of the piece. The texture generally becomes denser and the use of the themes at different octaves on the piano (both higher and lower), as well as in a wide range of different keys (mostly unrelated), adds to the profound mood of the work, as well as relieving the music of any implications of being static. The music gradually peaks towards the end of the movement followed by a relatively rapid *diminuendo*, which precedes the final abrupt contrast with a return to D minor.

The second movement begins, as already stated, with an ostinato figure – this time in G minor – and is joined in bar three by a wandering lyrical theme in the right hand that is over two octaves in range (Ex. 1.10). There are basically four short phrases in this melody, which



ends in G minor before a contrasting homophonic section is introduced making ample use of parallel chords (Ex. 1.11). This in turn gives way to a descending sequence (from bars 30 to 33) in which chromatic writing is again prevalent. A recurrence of the homophonic second theme of the movement leads to another descending sequence. The movement as a whole is structured in an ABA ternary form and at bar 49 the main theme from the 'A' section returns to wind down the movement in G minor for the contrast of the third and final movement, which begins in A minor.

Ex. 1.10: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 2, bars 1 to 10

The musical score for Ex. 1.10 consists of two systems. The first system is for the Piano, marked 'Andante espressivo' and 'cantabile', with dynamics 'pp' and 'pp'. The second system is for the Piano (Pno.), marked 'pp'. The score shows a descending sequence in the Pno. part and a chromatic writing in the Piano part.

Ex. 1.11: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 2, bars 20 to 24

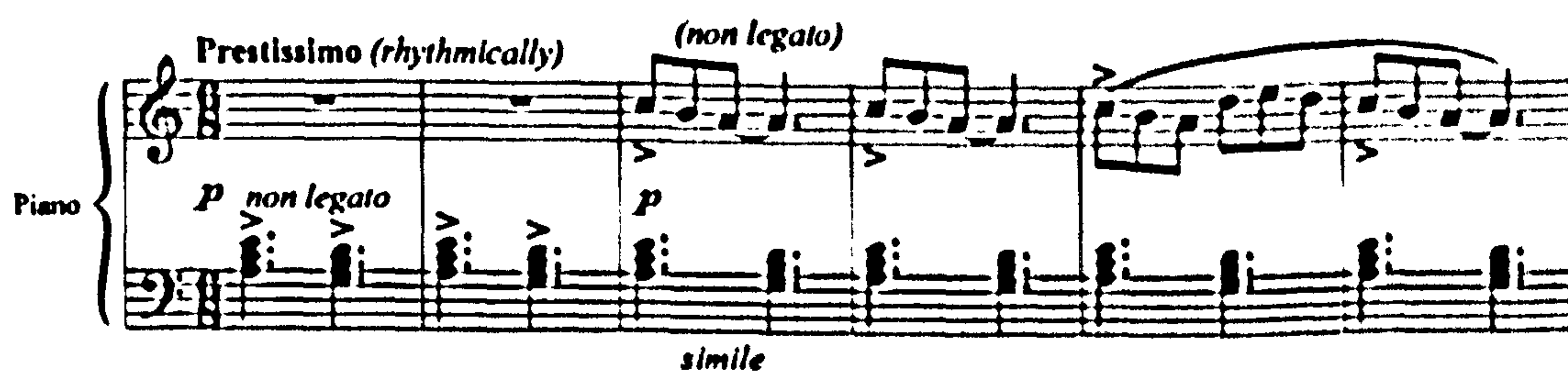
The musical score for Ex. 1.11 is for the Piano, marked 'Freely (a little quicker)', with dynamics 'p' and 'pp'. The score shows a descending sequence in the Piano part and a chromatic writing in the Piano part.

The final *prestissimo* movement is lively, brighter and a distinct change from the two preceding movements. It makes extensive use of sequences and other ideas used in the



opening movements, for instance differing textures when important themes return and sudden changes in dynamics for dramatic effect. As before, the final movement begins with two bars of ostinato introducing an agitated theme; Leighton asks for rhythmic and articulate playing with a very soft dynamic marking (Ex. 1.12). This initial theme leads on to various other sections, which appear to be part of a concise version of a conventional sonata form. A second and somewhat calmer subject is introduced at bar 33 and this leads to a short section marked 'Triumphantly'. This gives some indication of the approach of the end of the work and a hint of the final coda, which leads into the development of the second theme. At this stage in the piece, tension is again heightened with the aid of techniques already discussed earlier in the work, leading up to the recapitulation of the first theme and the final flourish of the coda ending in A major.

Ex. 1.12: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 3, bars 1 to 6



In the *Sonatina No. 1*, Leighton experiments with what were many more recent compositional techniques: these include the use of the whole-tone scale, which he often juxtaposes with chromatic writing; occasional use of quartal harmony; a prominent use of consecutive fifths; an increased use of parallel movement within the harmony; and a more obvious use of dissonance not created or prepared by suspensions or false relations. All of these techniques, which were recent additions to Leighton's musical style, are combined

with other more tried and tested techniques, such as the sequence, short musical phrases and sonata form.

Strong features in the formation of Leighton's compositional style are now becoming apparent, and possibly the most important one is his economy in treating musical material. Much of each movement (and in some later works pieces as a whole) can be derived and developed from just two or three short melodic ideas that take on various different guises through different textures or inversions. What makes this economy so effective is the way that these different guises are so rarely repeated. Often, much of the melodic material also happens within a very narrow interval span, perhaps more so in later works, and often within the space of a fifth or even less. This trait of a theme being encased in a small interval is particularly in evidence in the opening theme of the *Sonatina No. 1* (see Ex. 1.9).

Leighton's last work of 1946 was also for solo piano, *Three songs from Campania*. The composition book indicates that the *Three songs from Campania* were inspired by Virgil's *Eclogues*, and at the top of the manuscript there is a quotation: 'Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota et fontis sacros frigus opacum', which translates as 'Lucky old man, among familiar rivers here and sacred springs you'll angle for the cooling shade';<sup>43</sup> Melibocus is speaking to Tityrus in the first of the *Eclogues*. These three short pieces, all of a similar length, could be interpreted as three representations from the quotation – the lucky old man, the familiar rivers and sacred springs, and finally the cooling shade. In the first movement the lyrical style of the more mature Leighton is present in the form of a

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<sup>43</sup> Lee, Guy. (trans.), *Virgil: The Eclogues*, (London: Penguin Books, 1984), 33.



languishing and broad melody, which is gently accompanied, but contrasted with sections of disjunct playing (Ex. 1.13).

Ex. 1.13: *Three Songs from Campania I* (1946) – bars 15 to 25



The majority of the music that Leighton composed during the year 1947 up until his departure for Oxford was for solo piano. The composition book details two preludes for piano written in January of that year. The second of these preludes has an incomplete score and the first is only 40 bars in length. These two preludes were written shortly after the *Sonatina No. 1*, and show a similar type of experimentation – this is most noticeable in what remains of the second prelude, which shows an extended use of parallel moving harmony and a substantial influence of the whole-tone system. This is mixed with some quite virtuosic piano writing still in a fairly Romantic style, employing some dense textures, which takes the score onto three staves at various points. Among other notable features, the absence of a key signature in both the preludes is once again evident – it would be almost impossible to label these pieces with an individual tonic key, as they do not touch base with one particular key for long enough.

The next work listed in each of the composition books, *Sonata for Piano* is unfortunately lost, as are three more piano works from 1947: *Eclogue for Piano*, which is dated as composed in July and August; and the *Fugue in B flat minor* and *Fugue in A minor*, which are both dated as written in December. Despite these losses the month of April 1947 provides us with three more surviving piano works – *To the Spring*, *Toccata for Piano* and *Meditations in two parts for Piano*.

*To the Spring* is a serene reflection inspired by an extract from Catullus, which Leighton quotes at the top of the score, 'Iam ver egelidos refert tepores', which translates as 'now spring brings back unfrozen warmth'.<sup>44</sup> It is yet another exercise in lyricism as well as harmonic invention at the piano, employing some bitonal techniques to good effect. Various contrasts are used in this work as successfully as before with brief periods of tension juxtaposed suddenly with calm (Ex. 1.14).

Ex. 1.14: *To the Spring* (1947) – bars 31 to 37

The musical score for 'To the Spring' (1947), bars 31 to 37, is presented in two systems. The first system is labeled 'Piano' and the second system is labeled 'Pno.'. Both systems consist of a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a melodic line in the treble staff, with a corresponding bass line. The second system begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a more rhythmic, bitonal texture. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

<sup>44</sup> Lee, G. (trans.), *Catullus: The Complete Poems*, (Oxford, 1998), 46-47.



The *Toccata for Piano*, however, is in complete contrast to this work. It is a flurry of virtuosity, an intense semiquaver movement being maintained virtually throughout (Ex. 1.15). Within all this activity there is no reduction in the imaginative experiments in textures and tonality, which are very much an ongoing feature of Leighton's piano music during this and subsequent periods. A thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the piano is continuing to emerge, which was quite possibly happening in parallel with a growing confidence and ability in his piano playing technique – Leighton was to some extent learning how to write for the instrument effectively through playing and studying the works of other composers. The progression of his piano music in this way is a different kind of influence from his early attempts at composition described above, now composing with a more thorough knowledge of piano works, as well as a response to his advancing abilities.

Ex. 1.15: *Toccata for Piano* (1947) – bars 1 to 6

The musical score for 'Toccata for Piano' (1947), bars 1 to 6, is presented in two systems. The first system is for the Piano, and the second system is for the Pno. (Piano). The tempo is marked 'Allegro molto'. The Piano part begins with a forte (ff) dynamic, followed by a piano (pp) section marked 'legato', and then a section marked 'smile'. The Pno. part begins with a piano (p) dynamic and is marked 'express'.

The most substantial of the three surviving works from April of 1947 is the *Meditations in two parts for Piano*. There are eight meditations in all, although the first meditation has the word 'cut' inscribed at the top by the tempo marking in what appears to be Leighton's handwriting. Mostly of equal length, the meditations are of a significantly different style to

anything Leighton had written before for the piano, essentially all being a variety of two-part invention and important early exercises in counterpoint. Writing in this nature does provide a composer with certain restrictions, and could have been something of a challenge – the texture inevitably has to be considerably thinner and the individual lines and structure of the composition is much more exposed. Following on from the style used by Leighton in previous piano works there is a strong feeling in these miniatures of adapting the harmonic and dramatic inventiveness into this more restrictive idiom. Also beginning to feature in the writing are short sections of syncopation that was to become typical of his later works (Ex. 1.16). It can be observed that the key is again shifting constantly in these miniatures, not allowing the music to settle for too long at any point. Around every corner there is potential to build or release tension within the music, and a logical conclusion is that Leighton's music is fundamentally well-crafted, with the composer always having complete control over the exact direction of the music.

Ex. 1.16: *Meditations in two parts for Piano* (1947) – Meditation No. 1, bars 26 to 33

The musical score for Meditation No. 1, bars 26 to 33, is presented in two systems. The first system is for the Piano (Piano) part, and the second system is for the Piano (Pno.) part. The Piano part begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a crescendo (*cresc. poco a poco*) marking. The Pno. part features a series of chords and melodic lines. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats, and the time signature is common time (C).

This experiment into new, but relatively sparse textures is continued in the *Variations for Piano* written between May and July of 1947. The theme and most of the 14 variations (the manuscript contains suggested cuts of four of the variations that would take the total to ten)



are in either two or three parts and are all of fairly equal length. Each of the variations is typically without a key signature, and the diverse moods and treatments of the opening theme include varied time signatures and styles of writing. There are also assorted different harmonic techniques which further the character of his compositional style. Each variation is in essence a miniature, with a slight break marked between each movement, and none of the variations flows directly into the next. The theme is quite chromatic in nature, and indeed some of the phrases in the theme come close to being serial note-rows. The chromatic movement in the harmony is extremely prevalent, with the suggested tonality (D minor at the opening) soon being removed. The music travels through a whole series of other keys alongside extensive use of bitonality, with the result again of no one specific key for the work as a whole. The 14 variations do not adhere to the progression of keys set out in the theme and indeed the disguising of the theme in the variations renders it almost indecipherable in places.

From the summer of 1947 the only two works listed that are still in existence are the *Fugue in D minor for Piano* and the *Sonatina No. 2 for Piano* Opus 1b. The former is the first fugue listed in the composition books and is a substantial exploratory work into this somewhat difficult and technically demanding compositional practice. There are over 200 bars in this particular fugue in three parts. It has all the normal 'textbook' features of fugue and Leighton sets himself a fairly long and challenging opening theme on which to build the movement. Overall it is handled with a reasonable amount of flair and technical skill, giving a general impression of a comprehensive knowledge of harmony and counterpoint, particularly of the fugues of Johann Sebastian Bach and possibly also of Georg Frederic

Handel and select works by Ludwig van Beethoven. The fugue begins quietly, with a constant gradual *crescendo* throughout the considerable growth in the counterpoint until the closing section that commences with a *stretto*, which begins on a dominant pedal note and is followed in the left hand by the final statement of the fugal theme in octaves, bringing the fugue to a majestic close.

Leighton's rhythmic inventiveness and energy, mostly through the extensive use of syncopation and cross-rhythms are now beginning to emerge, the influence of Walton referred to by Leighton himself is becoming clear. Indeed the vigorous opening of the *Sonatina No. 2 for Piano* Opus 1b appears to very much in the style of Walton, with harmonic elements of Britten, which sees the closeness of the melodic activity abandoned in favour of a more disjunct style where the melody appears in both the right and left hand, and at times in canon between the two hands. Leighton's great fondness for dissonance in the music is also beginning to become evident, bearing in mind that these works were written before his sojourn in Rome and his more detailed study of serial music. In his earlier works the use of counterpoint is limited, but it is most certainly present and important and indeed a skill that was to become one of the more significant aspects of his compositional language. Basic methods of counterpoint – including canon, imitation and two-part invention – are more prevalent in his earlier works, and their use increases and develops over time. Leighton's scoring for the piano, with experimentation of varied chord spacing and the many other capabilities of the piano, can at times be rather orchestral in outlook. The assorted instruments that Leighton could have had in his mind during composition could be conjured up without the need of too much imagination.



The *Sonatina No. 2* Opus 1b is once again in a typical fast-slow-fast three movement arrangement. It was composed in August 1947, between leaving QEGS and beginning study at The Queen's College, Oxford. The first movement indicates a constantly changing dynamic and has a strong element of three beats in a bar. The melodic interest is often to be found alternating between the two hands making effective use of accompaniment techniques in the right hand. From the very opening bar it is obvious that there is no particular fixed key, the constantly changing key inviting the use of bitonality and juxtaposition of whole-tone and chromatic movement, now becoming a recurring feature of his music (Ex. 1.17).

Ex. 1.17: *Sonatina No. 2* Opus 1b – movement 1, bars 1 to 17

The musical score for the first movement of *Sonatina No. 2*, Opus 1b, bars 1 to 17, is presented in three systems. The tempo is marked 'Allegro'. The first system, labeled 'Piano', shows the right hand (RH) playing a melodic line with a piano (*p*) dynamic, while the left hand (LH) plays a simple accompaniment. The second system, labeled 'Pno.', shows the RH continuing the melodic line with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, and the LH playing a more active accompaniment. The third system, also labeled 'Pno.', shows the RH playing a melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic, followed by a decrescendo (*dim.*) to a piano (*p*) dynamic, while the LH continues with a strong accompaniment.

At various points in the music, a new and transforming texture is easily obtained by repeating a certain idea at a different octave and at a different dynamic. The music is never

short of ideas and the melodic material is used economically alongside a strong rhythmic sense. The harmonic progressions and movement are rarely predictable, and always keep the listener guessing to an extent.

The second movement (*Andante sostenuto*) is in complete contrast to the first, being gentle and characteristically lyrical. It is in ternary form (ABA) and the first section sees a brief respite from the constantly evolving key structures, moving at a considerably slower pace (Ex 1.18). The middle (B) section disturbs the serene mood a little with a slightly faster pace. A CD sleeve note by Bryce Morrison describes this movement as ‘a volte face with a sweet singing melody [...] A flowing *poco più mosso* transforms gentleness into radiance’.<sup>45</sup> A return to the tranquillity of the opening is found in the *come prima* section, with a little bit of spice added in the way of harmonic interest that brings the movement to a close.

Ex. 1.18: *Sonatina No. 2* Opus 1b – movement 2, bars 1 to 10

<sup>45</sup> Morrison, Bryce, *Leighton: Piano Works* CD sleeve note, (Colchester: Chandos Records, 2000), 6.

The third and final movement of the second sonatina (*Allegro molto*) presents a joyful and almost playful contrast to the second movement, which Morrison describes as a 'return to hyperactivity, a dazzling squib and end to a work of consummate skill' (Ex. 1.19).<sup>46</sup>

Ex. 1.19: *Sonatina No. 2* Opus 1b – movement 3, bars 1 to 8



Many of the important features of the first movement listed above now return, such as an extensive use of parallel motion (often whole tone) and bitonal elements again fused with a strong rhythmic sense and musical economy. An amalgam of new and traditional techniques is used in the final movement, with the sequence being employed to transform a phrase and change the texture.

As his first two published works, by the London firm of Alfred Lengnick, the sonatinas were the first of Leighton's compositions to receive a review in an important music publication, *Music and Letters*. These two works were reviewed, among others, alongside the music of Howard Ferguson, Henry Ley and Maurice Jacobson:

These Sonatinas, each in three tiny movements, are warmly to be recommended. They are easy to play, an almost unique quality in piano music, and they are full of nimble wit

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



and frank appeal. The style is that of an unbuttoned Vaughan Williams with additional perkinesses [*sic*] from France and Spain. The Sonatinas show a genial and original mind at play, and one waits with interest more works from Kenneth Leighton.<sup>47</sup>

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By this point in Leighton's development, it can be perceived that his compositional language and approach is increasingly beginning to become his own. There is an abundant use of all the traditional features discussed above in his works, alongside liberal (yet somehow always seemingly controlled) use of consecutive fifths, parallel movement and syncopation. The progression from a style which was mostly derivative of composers he had known and admired in 1945, to a developing individual style that is more absorbent of a greater variety of styles – as opposed to a simple regurgitation – is clear. Leighton's musical language at this point, however, is still some distance away from the more rounded and complete product and style of his later works.

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<sup>47</sup> Anon., *Kenneth Leighton: Sonatinas Nos. 1 and 2 for Piano*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 30, No. 3, July 1949).



## Chapter Two

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### Oxford, 1947-1951

On 9 October 1947 Leighton entered The Queen's College, Oxford as a Hastings Scholar in Classics. As a result of this move, the gradual but constant development in Leighton's maturity as a composer, clearly visible in his works up until the autumn of 1947, was to take a considerable leap forward in the vastly different surroundings of Oxford. The most important influences that were missing in the somewhat limited surroundings of Wakefield were now to be found in abundance. These included a greater number of prospects for performances of his works; there would also have been many more occasions for him to attend performances of a wider variety of music, as well as to join and perform with musicians of his own age.

Leighton was immediately active musically and was the librarian for the Eglesfield Musical Society for the academic year 1947 to 1948.<sup>1</sup> The Eglesfield Musical Society of The Queen's College is the oldest musical society in the University of Oxford and is named after the founder of the college, Robert de Eglesfield. The society consists of the Eglesfield Players and Chorus, and Leighton was to write for both of these groups during the time of his study at Oxford. *The Queen's College Record* reports that through this academic year the society (whose musical director was Bernard Rose) gave performances of works by George Frideric Handel (*Alexander's Feast*), Johann Sebastian Bach (*Missa Brevis in A major*),

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<sup>1</sup> *The Queen's College Record* (Oxford, 1948), 15.



Edmund Rubbra (*Canterbury Mass*), Henry Purcell (*Birthday Ode for Queen Mary*), Benjamin Britten (*Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*) and Arthur Bliss (*Pastoral*). In this summary of the year, certain performers are also mentioned: Alfred Deller, Duncan Thomson, Richard Lewis, Denis Brain and Eric Wetherell. Rubbra was also noted to have been present at the performance of his own *Canterbury Mass*.<sup>2</sup> Being surrounded by music and musicians of this calibre was certain to have had a substantial influence on his musical output.

**Table 2.1:** Compositions from September 1947 to August 1948

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Sept. 1947	<i>Sonatina No.3</i> *	pf	-
Dec.1947	<i>The Grasshopper</i>	voice, pf	-
Dec. 1947	<i>Fugue in B flat minor</i> *	pf	-
Dec. 1947	<i>Fugue in A minor</i> *	pf	-
Dec. 1947	<i>Toccata (in 3 movements)</i>	pf	-
Dec. 1947	<i>The Visitant</i>	voice, pf	-
Dec. 1947	<i>Five songs of James Joyce</i>	voice, pf	-
During 1948	<i>Scherzo Festivo</i>	full orch.	-
Jan. 1948	<i>Rhodanthe</i>	voice, pf	-
Jan. 1948	<i>Sequentia de Sancto Michael*</i>	voice, pf	-
March – April 1948	Incidental music to <i>Twelfth Night</i>	Fl, 2 vln, vla, vc	-
April 1948	<i>Sonata quasi fantasia</i>	Vln, pf	-
May – June 1948	<i>Fantasia (No. 2)*</i>	pf	-
June – July 1948	<i>Quartet for Strings</i>	2 vln, vla, vc	-
July – Aug. 1948	<i>Quintet for Piano and Strings*</i>	2 vln, vla, vc, pf	-

\* Indicates works which are lost

The above table represents Leighton’s compositional activities during his first academic year at Oxford (including the summer months that followed) – throughout this time he was still a student of Classics and not of music. It is useful to view Leighton’s development from this chronological list of the compositional year, as it clearly reveals his output to be rather neatly split into two obvious parts. The first part up to January of 1948 shows a

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



tendency to compose for the piano and for voice and piano, while the second part sees a complete change of direction into chamber music for much of the remainder of the year. The table also shows a distinct lack of a provision of opus numbers for individual works at this stage, following the allocation of Opus 1 to the two early piano sonatinas. In a sense, it is obvious which of Leighton's works would be allocated a number in terms of scale, with none of the works here perhaps considered part of a long-term body of composition, with some works regarded as just compositional exercises. There are fewer pieces in the second part of this clear division, as Leighton's early attempts at chamber works are of a larger scale than his much shorter and smaller-scale songs, which would obviously have been completed more quickly.

It is clear that Leighton was still concentrating on writing for his own instruments – as a pianist and a former cathedral chorister, he was evidently much more comfortable in writing for the keyboard and for the voice; as was seen in the previous chapter many of his compositions as a schoolboy were for these resources. This is not to say that all his earlier works for piano, and voice with piano, are all brilliant examples of his work, and there is still much evidence of a young composer cutting his teeth, however familiar he was with the medium.

The influence of a rather different environment is clear in a gently expanding range of genres to be found in the latter part of the year's work. The table above would suggest that his interest in chamber music was ignited by his composing incidental music for William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, making that perhaps one of the pivotal works of this period,



although musically it is not necessarily so interesting. It is not clear whether he was asked to write some accompanying music or if he perhaps volunteered his own services, but it is fairly clear that this is the point as a student when his scope as a composer was widened with significant consequences.

When looking at Leighton's compositions from his time at Oxford, the most helpful of the three existing composition books in his own hand is the first one. This gives the most detailed and complete version of events that develop throughout the years 1947 to 1951, containing two entries that are not found in the later books, and more complete dates of composition for a number of works. The book also details an element of indecisive activity, with the majority of the works from this period not retaining their original opus number. Despite this extra detail, Leighton's method of assigning opus numbers is still something of a mystery, with no real logical progression throughout his earlier works.

The first of Leighton's works from this period, mentioned only in the first of the three composition books, was written in September 1947, just before he went up to Oxford, and is the *Sonatina No. 3* for piano. No manuscript exists for this work and this is the only reference to it. Following this, the first compositions definitely started during his time at Oxford, and listed in all the composition books, include: the two fugues for piano already mentioned as lost and the *Toccata* for piano in three movements. These compositions are entered alongside seven songs in December 1947. The first of the songs is *The Grasshopper*, the text of which is from Anacreon (translated from the Greek), showing a continued combining of Leighton's two main strengths of Classics and music. The rest of the song

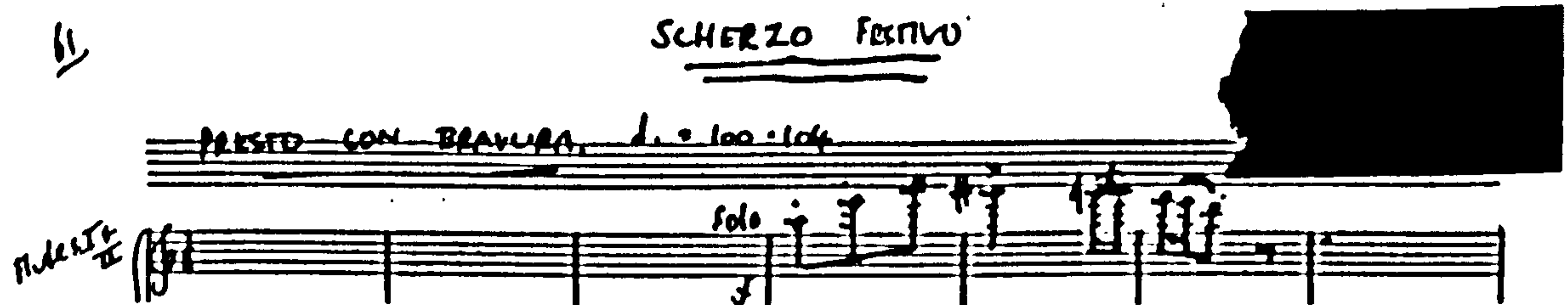
texts from December 1947 are taken from the works of the Irish poet James Joyce, five of which are grouped as *Five Songs of James Joyce*. The sixth and remaining Joyce song, *The Visitant*, was originally in the group as number four of six, and later removed – the manuscript of *The Visitant* contains the number four in roman numerals, while numbers four and five have had their roman numerals altered. The final songs of this group were written in January 1948; *Rhodanthe*, the text by Agathias, is listed along with one other song, *Sequentia de Sancto Michael*, which is unfortunately lost.

At some point during 1948, Leighton's first Oxford work for full orchestra was written, the *Scherzo Festivo* – the exact dates of composition are unknown. While a significant work in that it won him a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, it has been forgotten. It was not afforded an entry by Leighton in any of his three composition books, and the manuscript itself has a small piece of brown paper pasted over his name both on the cover and inside the manuscript. His name was however written in once more on the cover beneath this in his own hand. There are number of Leighton's manuscripts that carry this trait of covering up his own name as a composer, suggesting that at some point he was keen to deny these works, or had maybe become embarrassed with their youthful and perhaps naïve qualities. The manuscript of *Scherzo Festivo* also suggests that it may have been a larger work, with what appears to be the beginning of a second movement: the end of the *Scherzo* is followed by a page of music for the same scoring that has been crossed out. The page number of the extra page does not correspond with the remainder of the manuscript, but the number 'II' has been crossed out at the top of the extra page. There is also slight evidence of a number 'I' at the top of the score: the underlining of the main title has been extended, and the 'R'



of 'Scherzo' appears to be more bold than the rest of the title, suggesting the 'I' may have been incorporated (Illustration. 2.i and see Appendix 3 for deleted second movement).

Illustration 2.i: Manuscript of Leighton's *Scherzo Festivo* (1948)



The main entry in the composition books between March and April of 1948 is an exploration into a new area for Leighton – incidental music for a production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. This particular production was to take part in the Fellow's Garden of The Queen's College, Oxford with the accompanying music performed by the Eglesfield players. The music for *Twelfth Night* is written for flute quintet and voice, most of the movements being just for the quintet. Where the voice does appear in the score it is marked as an arrangement of a song, the texts being taken from the play.

A contemporary of Leighton's at Oxford, Christopher Strobe (brother of Rosamund Strobe, musical secretary to Benjamin Britten towards the end of his life and archivist of the Britten-Pears Museum after the death of both Britten and Peter Pears), was a medical student at New College in Oxford, but also a keen amateur violinist. He was recruited to play for this production and has written of the music for *Twelfth Night* as well as other works:

I first met Kenneth Leighton when I was roped in to play some incidental music he had written for a Shakespeare play performed out of doors at Queen's College. The



music was excellent but Kenneth dismissed our congratulations saying it was only an Elizabethan pastiche and anyone could do it.<sup>3</sup>

April 1948 saw the composition of *Sonata quasi fantasia* for violin and piano in one movement and an entry in Leighton's composition books for May to June 1948 lists a *Fantasia for Piano (No. 2)*, the manuscript of which is lost. There is no mention of a first fantasia in any of the composition books and no manuscript is extant. It is possible that this and its preceding work could have been withdrawn, and perhaps destroyed by the composer, with the first fantasia, for some reason, not being entered into the composition books.

The summer of 1948 continued to be a prosperous time in terms of composition, with some of Leighton's first forays into chamber music – the *Quartet* for strings, written between June and July, and the *Quintet* for piano and strings, written between July and August, although the manuscript of the latter remains lost. This further experimentation into new genres was preceded by a significant development; following successful study of Classics during his first year at Oxford, alongside his continuing and productive composing activities, Leighton made the decision to pursue a degree in music alongside his original choice of subject. Bernard Rose, his tutor for music at The Queen's College wrote in February 1995:

Kenneth Leighton came to the Queen's College, Oxford in 1947 as a classics scholar from Wakefield in Yorkshire. He gained first class honours in moderations in 1948 and gained permission from the college to change to music.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Strode, Christopher E., correspondence with Christopher D. S. Field (1 February 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Rose, Bernard, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (February 1995).

Leighton began to study music concurrently with Classics at this point, working towards the Bachelor of Music degree. While his composing activities had been sustained and developed considerably during his time as a Classics student, the decision to allow him to pursue a degree in music proved to be extremely decisive at this juncture, and was possibly one of the largest factors in his eventual path into music and composition.

The content of the course that he would have followed, under the watchful eye of Rose, appears to have been based on submissions of compositions. Little information is to be found today on Leighton and the B.Mus. course from his time at Oxford. As is usual, his personal file recording his career at Oxford was kept only for a fixed period, and all that remains is a short record detailing his entry into Oxford and the degrees obtained. A small detail of Leighton's assessment for the B.Mus. degree at Oxford is found in a story that Christopher Finzi recalls that his father, Gerald '[...] was fond of repeating [...] that Bernard Rose had told him that when Kenneth did the Fugue Paper in his finals, he left two thirds of the way through the exam, having written an eight part fugue instead of the four requested, saying they could choose any four parts.'

The information in his Oxford University record goes on to include the erroneous details of a period of national service in the armed forces – Leighton was in fact excused from this on grounds of health.<sup>6</sup> Robert Leighton recalls the following: 'In October 1951 he was

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<sup>5</sup> Finzi, Christopher, correspondence with Adam Binks (20 May 2006).

<sup>6</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.

back in the UK for a National Service medical, which he failed on account of a severe (how fortunate!) outbreak of eczema.’<sup>7</sup>

According to Leighton himself, the music culture of Oxford at that time was very much centred on English music, with limited study of continental contemporary music. Leighton wrote the following regarding his time in Oxford:

In spite of extensive classical studies during my first two years at Oxford, I was steeped in music and particularly in English Music. Rubbra was there and came along especially to hear me play a new piano sonata. Then there was a chance to hear V[aughan] W[illiams]’s new symphony (No. 6) in the Sheldonian.<sup>8</sup>

In another article from 1979, Leighton is quoted as saying the following about his musical background:

The deep and exciting experiences I had were in Palestrina and *Messiah*. I suppose that stays with one. When I went to Oxford, I became very interested in Elizabethan music and 16<sup>th</sup> century music in general [...].<sup>9</sup>

Serial music and neo-classical music, for example, was only to be found in occasional concerts, through private study and presumably interaction with other students. It is not known if Leighton pursued any interest in music by serial composers during his time at Oxford – serial techniques were very much incorporated into his musical style following this period, suggesting that it may have been unlikely but not impossible.

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<sup>7</sup> Leighton, Robert, correspondence with Adam Binks (15 May 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Memories of Gerald Finzi*, (Finzi Trust Friends’ Newsletter, 1988)

<sup>9</sup> Dreyer, Martin, *Yorkshire Composers 6: Kenneth Leighton*, (November in Yorkshire, Yorkshire Arts Association, 1979).



By the end of Leighton's first academic year at Oxford, compositional progress had been steady and continuous. Despite not studying music initially, he continued to compose at a rate similar to that of his schooldays. The fact that there are no published works or compositions with an allocated opus number during this year, may give an indication that it certainly wasn't his first priority. The often limited scoring of these works is also an indication of how, with no known tutoring, progress was less than it perhaps could have been – Leighton branches out into only slightly more adventurous writing towards the end of the academic year and into the summer. Embarking on study towards the B.Mus. degree would however put Leighton's progress as a composer onto a different, more ambitious and productive level.

**Table 2.2:** Compositions from September 1948 – August 1949

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Sept. – Dec. 1948	<i>Sonata No. 1 for Piano</i>	pf	2
Sept. 1948	<i>Go, lovely rose</i>	voice, pf	-
Dec. 1948	<i>To Daffodils</i>	voice, pf	-
Dec. 1948	<i>Three Carols for Mixed Voices</i>	SATB	-
Dec. 1948	<i>The Twelve Days of Christmas</i>	SATB	-
Dec. 1948	<i>Symphony for Strings</i>	str.	3
March – April 1949	<i>Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano</i>	vln, pf	4
April 1949	Incidental music to Farquhar's <i>The Beaux Stratagem</i>	2fl, bsn, hn, str	-
June 1949	<i>In the Dark Pinewood</i>	voice, pf	-
June – July 1949	<i>Piano Sonata (in Two Movements)</i>	pf	-
July 1949	<i>Serenade in C for Flute and Piano</i>	fl, pf	[19a]
July 1949	<i>Sonata for Viola and Piano</i>	vla, pf	-
Aug – Sept. 1949	<i>Sinfonia Concertante for Piano and Full Orchestra *</i>	pf, full orch.	-
August 1949	<i>Missa Brevis</i>	SATB	-
August 1949	<i>Pater Noster</i>	SATB	-

\* Indicates works which are lost



In the above table, listing Leighton's compositions during his second academic year at Oxford (again counting the summer months that followed), further significant developments can easily be seen. This second year as a student, in which he had begun to study music alongside Classics displays much more variation in the type of works that he was writing. There are only three completed songs in existence from this year and only two works for piano, showing a more balanced output. The most significant and pivotal works in this year are those of larger scale, particularly the *Symphony for Strings*, which represents Leighton taking his music onto a higher and a much more extended level.

There is a gentle increase in the number of works that are allocated an opus number, with the obvious choice of those being published receiving one. The *Serenade in C* from July 1949 has a significantly higher opus number than the rest of the works in this year, as its number was allotted following some revision in 1953. The *Serenade* was, however, not published until it was rediscovered some years following Leighton's death, when it was given Opus 19a; Leighton eventually allocated Opus 19 to the *Burlesque for Orchestra* written in 1957.

In September 1948, Leighton began his first larger-scale piano work, the *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2, which he completed in December of the same year. On its publication by Lengnick, Music and Letters reviewed the *Sonata No. 1 for Piano*:

Two charming Sonatinas by Kenneth Leighton were recently reviewed. His new essay on a slightly larger scale preserves many of their virtues, particularly the considerable one of easy and effective pianoforte writing; but a certain poverty of harmonic style becomes apparent. In particular, the use of parallel common chords both in root position and first inversion – in any case not an original device – is persisted in to the

point of tedium. The melodic invention is hardly individual enough to be convincing. Against this must be set some interesting enharmonic modulations and a lively sense of colour.<sup>10</sup>

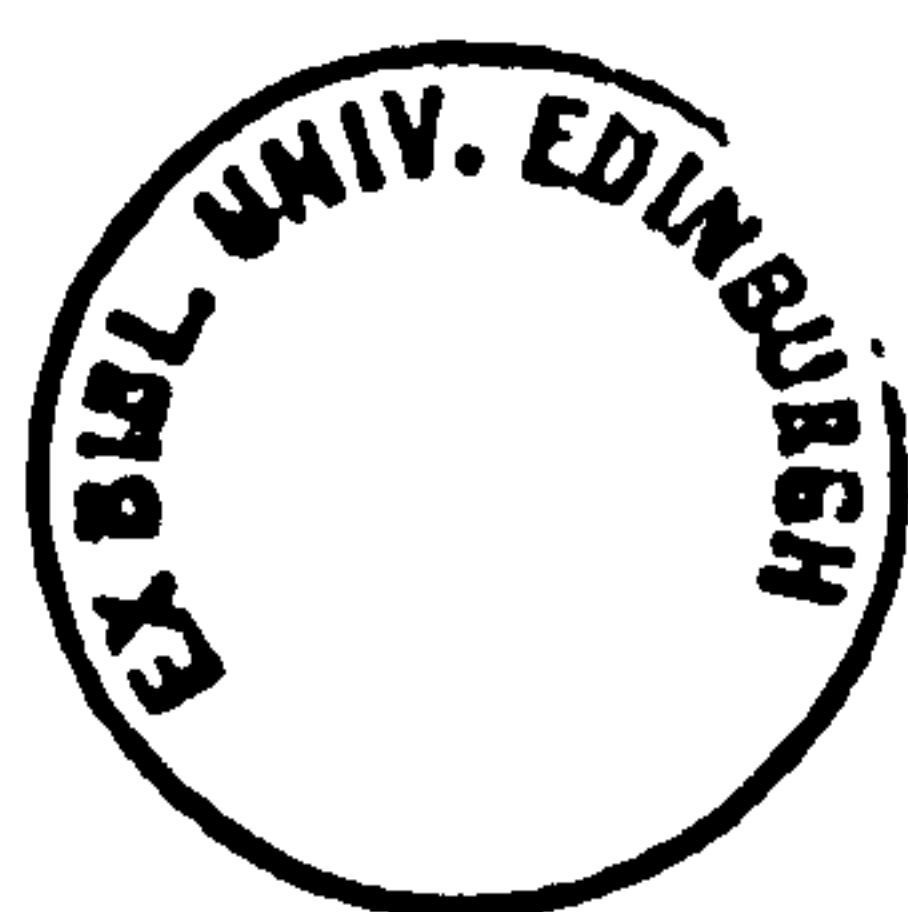
Around the composition of this first numbered piano sonata, Leighton was still writing for the voice, along with early attempts at writing choral music. He wrote two songs for voice and piano towards the end of 1948, *Go, lovely rose* and *To Daffodils*. The first entries in the composition book for choral forces appear in December 1948 with a set of three carols, *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child*, *The seven joys of Mary* and *Sleep, holy Babe*. The first of these became one of Leighton's best-known works and it is probably one of his most widely performed works today. Written whilst still only 19 years of age,<sup>11</sup> it is a clear flash of inspiration that would be exceedingly difficult to find fault with. The music of *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* was later to find itself with a Latin text in the cantata *Veris Gratia* Opus 6 – which was made up of material from a number of individual works – and the carol itself was later to be published as part of a set with two different carols in 1956 (*The Star-song* and *An ode on the birth of our saviour*) as Opus 25. Listed alongside the *Three Carols* and also written in December 1948 is an original version (rather than an arrangement) of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

The year 1949 saw the appearance of the first of Leighton's earliest published works, with the two sonatinas for piano being taken on by the London firm of Alfred Lengnick and Co. Ltd, who also published the music of composers such as Rubbra, Humphrey Searle, William Alwyn and Malcolm Arnold. It is likely that the two sonatinas were accepted for

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<sup>10</sup> Keys, Ivor, *Piano Music*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 31, No. 4, October 1950), 372.

<sup>11</sup> Despite various sources, which state that Leighton composed *Lully, lulla* at 18 or even 17 years of age, each of the composition books at this point indicate that he was in fact 19.





publication around the time that he began to study music at Oxford, as Bernard Rose writes about meeting him to discuss beginning study in music in 1948:

He was sent to me, I being the music tutor of the college. In my pompous way I asked him what were his qualifications in music, whereupon he produced the piano sonatinas 1 and 2 (op. 1a of 1946 and 1b of 1947) published by Lengnick! As if this were not enough, he gained the LRAM piano performers' diploma while still at school.<sup>12</sup>

The occasional orchestral nature of some of his piano writing by this point strongly suggests his next obvious and major step in his development as a composer, and his first significant work for small orchestral forces was the *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3. Begun in December 1948 and completed in March 1949, this three-movement symphony for conventional string forces, reveals Leighton increasingly, compared to previous works up to that point, experimenting with aspects of counterpoint. The miniatures that Leighton had mostly been writing were of course essential for early compositional exploration, but in order to develop fully as a composer it was vital to branch out and expand his capabilities. Leighton's experimentation was clearly now concerned with expanding his compositional technique into extended forms with greater resources and a more symphonic outlook. In this extended format, this is probably the first noticeable piece that gives early and promising indications of Leighton's future as a composer of stature.

One of his most significant musical experiences of this period as a student happened at Oxford, where he was beginning to meet some of the major figures of the British musical establishment at the time. His composition tutor at Oxford was the already distinguished Bernard Rose, who would introduce Leighton in time to Rubbra, Vaughan Williams and,

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<sup>12</sup> Rose, Bernard, correspondence with Josephine Leighton (February, 1995).

most importantly, to Gerald Finzi. In an article titled *Memories of Gerald Finzi* Leighton himself describes how the two came to meet:

To be introduced to Finzi in the flesh (1949) was therefore a thrilling event. It happened through Bernard Rose who asked Finzi to look at the score for my *Symphony for Strings* opus 3 which I composed during the winter of 1948-9 [...] I was really quite astonished when the next thing was an invitation to attend a rehearsal of this work by the Newbury String Players under Finzi.<sup>13</sup>

Leighton goes on to say how it was rehearsed with 'such care and understanding'<sup>14</sup> and how it was one of the most thrilling events of his musical career, especially so as he relates: '[...] he took me aside to explain how certain little passages could be scored in a "slightly safer manner"'<sup>15</sup> Most importantly he adds: 'Such was his insight that he had immediately touched on points of self doubt deep in my own subconscious'.<sup>16</sup> The *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 was first performed by the Newbury String Players on 10 December 1949, conducted by Gerald Finzi himself. On 17 October 1951, the Harvey Philips String Orchestra also gave an early performance of *Symphony for Strings* in the Wigmore Hall, London and *The Musical Times* reported of the concert:

It introduced a composer with something to say – but one who didn't always realize when he had had his say, for a contrapuntal motor stimulus kept the first and second movements going for too long. The third movement, with some indebtedness to the Stravinsky of 'Dumbarton Oaks' [...] was firmly moulded, and the texture of the string-writing was throughout clean and agreeable, the part-writing inventive and generally vital.<sup>17</sup>

One further encouraging summary of the work reads as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Memories of Gerald Finzi*, (The Finzi Trust Friends' Newsletter, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> A.P., *London Concerts: New Works*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 92, No. 1306, December 1951), 563.



This work was first performed last December [...] when it made a great impression, not only on the general public but also upon several distinguished musicians who had journeyed to hear it.

One may find, if one looks for them, qualities of the seasons, particularly in the bursting forth of the last movement after a moving but sombre slow movement. But the work stands on its own as a fine piece of musical thinking and feeling: with a mastery of the string medium, a structural sense and a technical skill, all of which are used to express a sincere and poetical musical mind. Being written in 1949, before the composer was twenty, it uses the language of its age and familiarity with the work only increases respect for the natural and unforced use of a contemporary idiom.<sup>18</sup>

Finzi was a great supporter of the work of young and relatively inexperienced composers and on occasion did use the Newbury String Players as a vehicle to promote new works of lesser known and young composers. In his biography of Finzi, Stephen Banfield tells us that composer Anthony Scott was Finzi's 'musical godson'<sup>19</sup> and that:

[...] his promotion of Scott's music culminated in 1951 when he hired the Kalmar Orchestra in London to play through his string Sinfonietta (the Newbury String Players also demonstrated [Kenneth] Leighton's *Veris Gratia* [Suite Opus 9] and [Robin] Milford's *Elegiac Meditation*). This was for the benefit of, and probably paid for by, Vaughan Williams, who then financed a Boyd Neel Orchestra concert of all three works, whether because he believed in them himself or simply wished to put his money where Gerald's mouth was.<sup>20</sup>

Finzi appears to have been appreciative of and impressed with Leighton's early work, and was to be something of a mentor and advisor to him in the few years leading up to Finzi's death in 1956. Further details of Finzi's support for Leighton are found along with this anecdote about a trip to Leeds following a performance of Finzi's *Intimations of Immortality*. Quotations from Joy Finzi's personal journal are found in italics throughout the main text of McVeagh's book:

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<sup>18</sup> Anon., *Symphony for Strings* programme note Newbury String Players, (date unknown). This note was possibly written by Gerald Finzi.

<sup>19</sup> Banfield, Stephen, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 317.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 318. The Kalmar Orchestra also played the first performance of the *Veris Gratia Cantata* Op. 6.



On their way home from Leeds they called on Kenneth Leighton's mother at Wakefield. Realizing the modesty of his home – a *back-to-back four roomed house in a cobbled street* – Joy tactfully stayed in the car in another road and Gerald walked alone to the door. *Pleasant to think that in these days outstanding genius, born in such surroundings, can through State Aid fulfil itself.* What was needed now, they thought, *was help to enable the uncommon person to be free to be uncommon.* Gerald had done his share, acting as Leighton's sponsor, writing testimonials for him, sending his scores to people who might play them; further, he had suggested that Leighton should enter for the Royal Philharmonic Society prize (which he won), and had extracted £100 from the Butterworth Trust for copying his orchestral parts.<sup>21</sup>

One of Leighton's next major works for orchestral forces was the *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings* Opus 9 completed in March 1950. Following on from the success of the *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3, this work was written for Gerald Finzi and the Newbury String Players and was dedicated to the memory of Finzi when it was published by Novello as late as 1972. In the interim period (between March 1949 and March 1950), there is an increasing amount of music for larger forces listed in the composition books. Works of this type include the *Music to Farquhar's "The Beaux Strategem"* for strings, two flutes, bassoon and horn (April 1949), which was written for a production by the Eglesfield Players; the *Sinfonia Concertante for Piano and Orchestra* and the major work *Hippolytus* Opus 8. The *Sinfonia Concertante* was written between August and September of 1949 and while being discarded as a whole work, material was reused from the slow movement in a work that won the second prize of the Royal Philharmonic Society.<sup>22</sup> There is no further detail about which sections were reused or in which piece.

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<sup>21</sup> McVeagh, Diana, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 215.

<sup>22</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composition Book* (Nos. 1, 2, and 3), (unpublished)

Leighton himself was greatly influenced by Finzi's music, which he discovered, mostly by playing (and even 'with croaky attempts to sing them myself'<sup>23</sup>) through his songs at Oxford. He declares that 'I never had any difficulty in responding to the pure lyricism which imbued not only the vocal line but top, bottom and middle of the accompaniment too'.<sup>24</sup> He even goes as far as to say that the compassion of the songs spoke to him more than any other English composer of that time.

Other works of the period from March 1949 to March 1950 include two works published by Lengnick – *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 and the *Sonata for Cello and Piano* Opus 5 (only the slow movement was published as the *Elegy for Cello and Piano* in a shortened version recommended by Leighton himself). There were also several works written during this time that were not published including incidental music for Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*, a song (*In the Dark Pinewood*), *Piano Sonata in two movements*, *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* Opus 19a (later revised in 1953), *Missa Brevis* for SATB chorus and *Pater Noster*, also for SATB chorus. There is one more work, the second work featured only in the first composition book, a *Sonata in C minor for Viola and Piano* that was written in July of that year. The score of this work is still in existence although the entry in the first composition book lists the work as 'discarded'.<sup>25</sup>

Christopher Strode, Leighton's contemporary at Oxford and the dedicatee of the *Sonata No.1 for Violin and Piano*, wrote about the first performance for which he played the violin:

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<sup>23</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Memories of Gerald Finzi*, (The Finzi Trust Friends' Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composition book No. 1*, (unpublished).



[...] he approached me to say he had written a sonata for violin and piano and would I like to try it? We then found ourselves part of a grandiose scheme to make a musical tour of French Universities, giving a concert at each place (presumably sponsored by the relevant university) to take place in July 1949. A group of perhaps 8 or 9 string and wind players, plus Kenneth on the piano, was assembled and we set off. The places being visited were Paris, Poitiers Bordeaux, Toulouse – “and others”, all being organised by another undergraduate. Sadly his enthusiasm easily outshone his administrative powers and Toulouse proved the last stop [...] Meanwhile, the first performance of Kenneth’s sonata had actually taken place in the Grand Theatre of Bordeaux, a totally forbidding place for a chamber concert.

We had to play on the stage, surrounded by heavy curtains and lit by slanting stage lights of amber, red, blue and green [...] The sonata was well received though the audience was not large – we understood that a local boxing match on the same evening was an unbeatable rival attraction.<sup>26</sup>

He also details further significant performances:

Subsequently Kenneth and I played the sonata once in Oxford and once I think in Cambridge and London. We also went up to Lengnicks [sic] to play it to them so that it could be considered for publication (it was of course accepted). At about this time [10 February, 1951] we recorded it at a small “studio” in Oxford – one room above a shop in the Broad. One walked in off the street, had three or four minutes to get ready and tune up – then the light flashed and off you went [...] the sound quality sounded as though Eddison [sic] himself had done it [...]<sup>27</sup>

In a subsequent letter Strobe goes on to say:

I knew Bernard Rose quite well while I was an undergraduate and later a doctor working in Oxford. Kenneth and I usually practiced in Bernard’s room at Queen’s (ground floor at West corner of front quad, overlooking High Street) and I usually played in the Eggesfield [sic] concerts which he conducted.<sup>28</sup>

Subsequent to its publication by Lengnick the following review for the first violin sonata appeared in *Music and Letters*:

In his Violin sonata, Kenneth Leighton shows us a more passionate art than in his admirable Sonatinas for piano. The range of his harmony is extended as well, and he

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<sup>26</sup> Strobe, Christopher, correspondence with Dr Christopher Field, (Thursday 1 February 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



shows himself able to build paragraphs which cumulate with fine effect. The first movement in particular, sweeps on in the grand manner. One or two harmonic tricks, especially the frequent parallel chords of the sixth, are tending to become commonplaces, and one hopes that Leighton's high promise will soon allow him to dispense with them. The work is well written for both instruments.<sup>29</sup>

The *Musical Times* also gave a brief review of the published violin sonata saying how it was:

'an agreeable work [...] revealing a feeling for the *cantilena*, but the composer is not always sufficiently discriminating about the quality of his material [...] and several easily recognisable influences seem to be at work on him – Bloch and Vaughan Williams chief among them'.<sup>30</sup>

The two works listed in the composition books for June 1949, are a song (*In the dark pinewood*) and *Sonata in Two Movements for Piano*. The song is no more substantial or further developed than any other song from this period; it does not belong to any particular group and was the only song Leighton wrote in 1949. The text is by James Joyce and the poem has four short verses. The *Sonata in Two Movements for Piano*, is a much more substantial work than the song from the same month. Written after the *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 and completed in July of 1949 it was interestingly never numbered as the second piano sonata – perhaps, with it consisting of only two movements, Leighton did not regard this latest work as structured as a full piano sonata in the same way as the earlier work, while being more substantial than the Opus 1 sonatinas.

The *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* Opus 19a, being one of the handful of his works to be labelled with a specific key, was written in July 1949 for a fellow student, Gustav Born. After being subsequently revised in June 1953, both the original and revised scores were

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<sup>29</sup> Anon, (Music and Letters, April 1952).

<sup>30</sup> L.S., *New Music: Instrumental*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 93, No. 1317, November 1952), 506.

lost. The first composition book details that the original title of this work was in fact *Sonata for Flute and Piano*. It was allocated to Opus 19, which was later given to the *Burlesque* for orchestra.

Following Leighton's death, the autographed and dated score of the revised version of the *Serenade* was recovered by the flautist Thomas Morris and quickly published and recorded – the original score was never recovered, although the extent of the revisions is made clear from the recent discovery and re-mastering of an early recording of the original version.<sup>31</sup> The work retains Leighton's more youthful English style typical of his time at Oxford and when published had its opus number restored as 19a. The work was first performed in its original version on 13 June 1950 by Gustav Born with Leighton at the piano at a meeting of the Oxford University Club and Union.

The recording of the original version is played by Gustav Born accompanied by Leighton on the piano; the most noticeable difference is that the final movement was added as part of the 1953 revisions. Other than this the amendments to the first two movements are mostly superficial, and, in revising the work, the style is little changed from the original version. The extra movement is also more akin to his work from this time as opposed to his more developed works. The first known performance of the revised version wasn't until after its rediscovery, and took place on 3 December 1992 with Thomas Morris on the flute and Robert Bottone at the piano at Winchester College. Giles Easterbrook, formerly

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<sup>31</sup> This recording was discovered within part of Mrs. Josephine Leighton's personal collection and remastered in early 2006.



of Novello and the editor of the published version of the work, supplied a note on the *Serenade*.

Stylistically it is an excellent example of his best work of the period, evoking the poise and elegance of his beloved Ravel and acknowledging a debt of gratitude to Gerald Finzi [...] The effect is a sort of Watteau landscape translated into the Cotswolds, while throughout its three movements there steadily emerges Leighton's genuinely individual creative imagination.<sup>32</sup>

In the first of Leighton's three composition books there is a list of early works and what appears to be a record of a number of individuals and publishers to whom he sent copies of each work listed. The *Serenade* is listed as being sent to two different flautists Gareth Morris<sup>33</sup> and Geoffrey Gilbert<sup>34</sup> – Gareth Morris is the father of Thomas Morris, which explains the location of the manuscript of the *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* on its rediscovery. This list of other recipients of various works is fascinating and can be dated as begun in the early 1950s, containing works written from Leighton's time in Rome (1951) onwards, but nothing earlier. It shows that he was becoming increasingly ambitious for his own music: a number of works were sent to Novello, including the *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12, the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Strings and Timpani*, the *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 and *A Christmas Carol*; Lengnick received *Sonata No. 2 for Piano* Opus 17, the *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 and *Winter Scenes for Piano*; Schott were sent the second violin sonata; and *São Paulo: Toccata Brasiliana for Two Pianos* was sent to Chester Music. Certain other individuals are included in this list of perusal copies, in particular directors of orchestras that were known for promoting the work of younger and lesser-

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<sup>32</sup> Easterbrook, Giles, Foreword to *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano Op. 19a*, (Kenley: Maccenas Music, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Gareth Morris (b. 1920), was onetime chairman and principal flute of the Philharmonia Orchestra..

<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Gilbert (1914-1989), at the time of the composition of the *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano*, was the founding director of the Wigmore Ensemble.



known composers such as Leighton was then; these include Harvey Phillips (director of the Harvey Phillips Orchestra), Trevor Harvey (of the St Cecilia Orchestra)<sup>35</sup> and Finzi (of the Newbury String Players). The piano works were sent to such names as Margaret Kitchen, Eric Parkin and Peter Wallfisch, the latter of which was to become a great friend and exponent of Leighton's works.

August 1949 saw the composition of two choral works, a short setting of the Ordinary of the Mass (*Missa Brevis*) and a setting of the Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*). While at Oxford, Leighton wrote only a handful of works for mixed voices – while at school no works for voices are known of – and these two pieces represent around half of Leighton's student works devoted to this medium. There is no record of whether or not these two works were ever performed – although it is entirely possible they were used at some point – and there is no dedicatee on the manuscript or in any of the composition books.

Leighton's second academic year shows a marked improvement and progress in all aspects of his composition. The year's output included three works published shortly after this time, two works that were to be published much later and four allocated opus numbers. The diversity and scope of his writing from the very beginning of the academic year demonstrates a pivotal point in Leighton's development as a composer. It is entirely possible that the decision to pursue a career in composition was the result of events during this academic year; considerable success of this kind, in terms of publication, and renewed

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<sup>35</sup> Trevor Harvey (1911-1989), was a prolific choral and orchestral conductor.

encouragement from a tutor such as Bernard Rose could well have been the combination that helped Leighton to determine his future activities.

A more productive and seemingly confident air surrounds these works, which sees Leighton beginning to write a greater number of compositions, most of which are more extended in length. A comparison with Leighton's compositions before this demonstrates how he has now all but abandoned the miniatures that made up a good deal of his catalogue before this point. Along with more extended writing and forms comes an obvious need for a progression in general technique; harmony, and an ability to develop melodic and rhythmic material – much of Leighton's music does display a considerable advancement with the ideal circumstances and opportunities that were now well established at Oxford. The most notable examples of Leighton's compositions that display these particular progressions are those that made it to publication, however, these works still do not necessarily display an individual musical language and maturity, and his technique and abilities, while consistently improving, still had some way to go in pursuit of an independence of thought in his composition.



**Table 2.3:** Compositions from September 1949 to August 1950

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Dec. 1949	<i>Sonata in F minor for Cello and Piano</i> ( <i>Elegy for Cello and Piano</i> )	vc, pf	5
Sept. 1949 – March 1950	<i>Hippolytus</i>	Soloists, orator SATB, pf, full orch.	8
March 1950	<i>Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings</i>	ob, vc, str	9
April 1950	<i>Scherzo for Two Pianos</i>	2 pf	7
July – Aug. 1950	<i>Overture in F minor for Full Orchestra</i>	full orch.	-
Aug. – Sept. 1950	<i>Sonata No. 2 in G minor for Piano</i>	pf	-
Aug. 1950	<i>Two Laments of Catullus</i>	solo T, fl, str	-
Aug. – Sept. 1950	<i>Sonata No. 3 in D major for Piano</i>	pf	-
Aug. 1950	<i>The Cherry Tree</i>	Bar, pf	-
Aug. 1950	<i>If you were the only girl in the world</i>	CountTTB, pf	-

The works listed in the above table from Leighton's third academic year and the summer months that followed it, show yet more significant developments. There are noticeably fewer completed compositions in this period; however, those that were completed are works of a larger scale. The composition books and manuscripts together indicate no activity in May and June this year following the completion of the two most important works of Leighton's development up to this point, *Hippolytus* and the *Veris Gratia Suite*. Charting Leighton's activities in this way, it seems unlikely that there would have been a complete hiatus in his composing – far more often than not, there appeared to have been at least one work in progress according to the dates available. However, while it may be unlikely, it is not impossible as, for six months leading up to this seemingly dry spell, his creativity and output had been at its highest level than at any point in his life so far – a break from composing may have in fact been welcome. It is also possible that Leighton



would have been concentrating on his studies at this point with probable examinations in Classics towards the end of this academic year.

Throughout this year there are only three published works: *Elegy for Cello and Piano* (taken from the *Sonata in F minor for Cello and Piano*), *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings* (not published until 1972) and the *Scherzo for Two Pianos* (a reduction of the second movement of the *Veris Gratia Suite* published long before the suite itself).

Published in 1953 by Lengnick and dedicated to Jeanne Fry, the *Elegy for Cello and Piano* Opus 5 was in fact the slow movement from the *Sonata in F Minor for Cello and Piano*, which was discarded as a whole following its composition in December 1949. Despite this, the sonata did receive at least one complete performance on 4 March 1950, with the composer at the piano and a fellow Oxford student, Jeanne Fry, on the cello in the Cambridge University School of Music, – also, the manuscript remains in existence. Composed in December 1949, Leighton's entry in the composition book reads as follows: 'Slow movement published as "Elegy" for Cello and Piano – Shortened version recommended by the composer'.<sup>36</sup>

In a review in *Music and Letters*, Bernard Rose wrote of this work:

Kenneth Leighton's 'Elegy' again shows this young composer's gift of melodic writing. It does, however, possess harmonic weakness which does not persist in his most recent works. The cello has many opportunities of demonstrating its several characteristics.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composition Book No. 3*, (unpublished).

<sup>37</sup> Rose, Bernard, *Reviews of Music*, (*Music and Letters*, Vol. 35, No. 2, April 1954).

Rose would more than likely have known the *Elegy* as the slow movement of the *Sonata in F Minor*, being Leighton's tutor at the time of its composition, and was clearly not displaying any hint of bias, instead choosing to highlight the faults of the work, with the benefit of Leighton's further development in mind.

The immense work *Hippolytus* Opus 8 was to be Leighton's entry for the Mendelssohn Scholarship. Begun in September 1949 and completed in March 1950, it was by far Leighton's largest composition up until that point, scored for soloists, orator, chorus, piano and full orchestra. The first composition book details a little further that at the end of 1949 parts one and two of the work were complete and that 'numbers of 3 and 4' had also been written by this point. The work still remains in manuscript form today and as yet is unperformed. Using a libretto from Euripides (translated by Gilbert Murray) the composer himself classed it in the opera section of his select catalogue. Even though this work was to be one of his first major successes – allowing him to study abroad following his time in Oxford – it interestingly failed when originally submitted as an exercise in composition for the B.Mus. degree at Oxford.<sup>38</sup> The award, which was worth £300,<sup>39</sup> had been won by a number of distinguished composers, the first recipient being Arthur Sullivan. Leighton secured tuition with the Italian *avant-garde* composer Gofredo Petrassi, and was to study under him in Rome. It may have been Finzi's influence that led to this award of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, as Diana McVeagh in her biography of Finzi explains:

That December [1949] at Enborne, Gerald gave the first performance of a Symphony for Strings, Op. 3, by Kenneth Leighton. Gerald reported to Robin

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<sup>38</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., *Wakefield student gains famous music award*, (publication and date unknown).



Milford that Leighton was 'a young man up at Oxford (a pupil of Bernard Rose, who asked us to do it) & I've seldom come across an early work of such achievement'. Immediately he wrote to Howard Ferguson, asking for information about the Mendelssohn Composition Scholarship for Leighton.<sup>40</sup>

Following the completion of *Hippolytus*, Leighton embarked on perhaps the most important of his works from this period as a student, the *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings* Opus 9. Following the first performance of *Symphony for Strings* by the Newbury String Players and Gerald Finzi, it was written with the same performers in mind. Each movement is prefaced with a quotation from Helen Waddell's *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* and was dedicated to Finzi's memory when it was finally published in 1972. The subject of each of the quotations is that of Spring, the title itself meaning 'Spring most fair'. When *Veris Gratia* Opus 9 was first performed on 5 May 1951, under Finzi, Leighton recalls: 'I remember the first performance (with Anna Shuttleworth [sic] and Tony Danby) vividly and it was clear that Gerald loved the piece'.<sup>41</sup> The first performance was in a concert of the Shaftesbury and District Arts Club, and the suite was performed at the end of the first half preceded by *Concerto No. 3* by John Stanley and *Ballet Music from "Orpheus"* by Christoph Willibald Gluck.<sup>42</sup> The short note contained in the programme for the first performance reads:

In 1949 Newbury String Players gave the first performance of a *Symphony for Strings* by Kenneth Leighton, a work remarkable not merely as coming from a composer of nineteen, but also on its own vital and beautiful account. Since then, with the award of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and a flow of large scale works, this early promise has shown continual development.

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<sup>40</sup> McVeagh, Diana, *Gerald Finzi: His Life and Music*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005) The quoted letter from Finzi was written in June 1949 and before the first performance of *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3.

<sup>41</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Memories of Gerald Finzi*, from the Finzi Trust Friends' Newsletter (1988). The original programme states the cellist for this first performance was actually Jeanne Fry.

<sup>42</sup> Anon., Newbury String Players concert programme (Saturday, 5 May 1951).



The present work is concerned with the same mood underlying the Symphony – a preoccupation with the return of Spring – and is in the form of four movements prefaced by lines from mediaeval Latin Lyrics [...]<sup>43</sup>

*Veris Gratia* Opus 9 has often been compared to Vaughan Williams's *Flos Campi* in nature, as well as some of its musical style being attributed with Finzi and Walton. Diana McVeagh writes of the suite that:

'The association with Vaughan William's [*sic*] *Flos Campi* is inescapable – both it and *Veris Gratia* are sensuous contemplations of natural beauty and of love. Leighton makes other bows too, to Walton, and to Finzi himself. So naturally accepted and used by a 20-year-old composer, such influences could only be beneficial.'<sup>44</sup>

In April 1974 Leighton wrote of *Veris Gratia* Opus 9: 'Needless to say after so many years I find it difficult to write a programme note for this work [...] I really think that the noted words from Mediaeval [Latin] Lyrics are the important thing'.<sup>45</sup>

It is at this point in the first of the three composition books that we begin to see increasing uncertainty in Leighton's allocations of opus numbers. From Opus 1 to 5 there is a chronological progression to the numbers. Following this, though, the *Veris Gratia Suite* Opus 9 appears to have originally been labelled Opus 6 continuing the chronological pattern, although the number was subsequently changed to 7, back to 6 again before settling on 9. The *Scherzo for Two Pianos* Opus 7, which is an arrangement of the second movement of *Veris Gratia* completed in April 1950, had its number changed from 8 to 7. The unusual assignation of opus numbers continues, with two more works composed in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., This note may have been written by Gerald Finzi, owing to the nature of the organisation of the Newbury String Players and their concerts being mostly down to Finzi and his wife Joy.

<sup>44</sup> McVeagh, Diana, *Finzi Cello Concerto & Leighton Suite 'Veris Gratia'*, (London, Chandos Records, 1986).

<sup>45</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, correspondence with Peter Craddock, (15 April 1974).

that year, including the *Veris Gratia Cantata* which was originally Opus 10, changed to 9 and then 6. There is no particular explanation for this, and neither is there an obvious logical reason.

In the *Scherzo for Two Pianos* Opus 7 the solo parts of the cello and oboe are deftly brought out by the use of unison octave writing. After its publication, *Music and Letters* reported of the work that:

‘Writing for two pianos, Kenneth Leighton shows a clearly English ancestry in the down-to-earth rhythms of the scherzo proper and in the broader folk-song type of passionate melody in the middle section. It is a well-turned composition, interesting to play, but apt here and there to be satisfied with turns of speech – for example the modal tag G F D G – which have become clichés.’<sup>46</sup>

The year 1950 continued to be productive, Leighton now being mainly concerned with larger-scale works, with the composition of songs and small-scale works for piano becoming less frequent from this point. The summer produced an *Overture in F minor for Full Orchestra*, *Sonata No. 2 in G minor for Piano* and *Sonata No. 3 in D major for Piano*, each of which was eventually withdrawn. The two piano sonatas were actually accepted for publication by Lengnick, and later withdrawn, supposedly by Leighton himself; the first composition book details that he had ‘second thoughts’ about them, as well as showing that the third sonata was given an opus number (which is crossed out), but the second sonata does not appear to have one. The *Overture* began life as a *Symphony in F minor for Full Orchestra* and is recorded in each of the three composition books as such. Only an *Overture* exists, and the bound manuscript contains the beginning of a second movement at the end

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<sup>46</sup> Keys, Ivor, Review of *Scherzo for Two Pianos* Op. 7, (*Music and Letters*, Vol. 34, No. 3, July 1953), 268.



of the score, and the overture itself does not have any particular evidence of a number 'I' at the top of the score. The remaining entries in the composition book for 1950 are: a song for voice and piano, *The Cherry Tree*; a part-song for mens' voices and piano, which is an arrangement of *If you were the only girl in the world*; the *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6; and a hymn tune also called *Veris Gratia* written in December and to be sung to *God the Father, God the Son (Litany of our Lady)*. The manuscript of the hymn tune is now unfortunately lost. *The Cherry Tree* and the part-song *If you were the only girl in the world* were both penned in August of 1950.

**Table 2.4:** Compositions from September 1950 to May 1951

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Dec. 1950	<i>Veris Gratia Cantata</i>	solo T, fl, SATB, timp, str	6
Dec. 1950	<i>Veris Gratia</i> – Hymn tune	probably 4 parts	-
Jan. 1951	<i>If you were the only girl in the world</i>	pf duet	-
Jan. 1951	<i>Six Songs of Spring</i>	Bar, pf	-
Feb. – March 1951	<i>Down by the Salley Gardens</i>	voice, pf	-
Feb. – March 1951	<i>Five Shakespeare Songs</i>	Bar, pf	-
Feb. – March 1951	<i>Far in a Western Brookland</i>	Bar, pf	-

The above table charts Leighton's final year of study in Oxford, this time without the summer months that followed, which were spent in Rome. On the face of it, this table portrays a backward look in his output, with a significant return to writing smaller scale songs. However the *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6 is much more significant than all of the songs written during this period before he left Oxford.

Labelled on the manuscript as written in the winter of 1950, the substantial pastoral cantata completed in December 1950 shared its name with the suite for oboe, 'cello and strings composed earlier that year – *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6. It appears to have been put



together quite hastily, and in places he cleverly adapts and uses musical material from the suite of the same name and from his carol *Lully, lulla thou little tiny child*. It also uses music from *Two Laments of Catullus* written in August 1950 and from an earlier piano work. It is dedicated to Bernard Rose and the Eglesfield Musical Society of The Queen's College, and received its first performance on Thursday 14 June 1951 with David Galliver as solo tenor, Delia Ruhm on flute, the chorus of the Eglesfield Musical Society and the string section and timpani of the Kalmar Orchestra, under the baton of Bernard Rose (see Appendix 2). The scoring is for solo tenor, solo flute, strings, timpani and SATB chorus – on the manuscript Leighton states a preference for a large body of strings. The majority of the texts used in *Veris Gratia* Opus 6, are once again from the manuscripts of the Benedictbeuern monastery in Bavaria found in Helen Waddell's *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, and one movement is from the writings of Catullus. Alongside some of the early piano works, and with the *Symphony for Strings*, *Hippolytus* and the *Veris Gratia* suite Leighton once again shows his deep interest in Classics, which clearly influenced a good deal of the music he wrote while a student and at school.

The first performance the *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6 was programmed alongside other contemporary music – *Songs of Springtime* by E. J. Mocran, and *Five Spenser Sonnets* by Rubbra. On 15 June, the Oxford Mail contained the following review of the cantata:

At Queen's College, Oxford, last night, a large audience heard a concert of modern vocal music directed by Bernard Rose.

The Highlight of the evening was Mr Kenneth Leighton's new work in which the Eglesfield Musical Society (for whom it was written) collaborated with Mr David Galliver and a section of the Kalmar Orchestra.

The work contains many beauties, though perhaps its greatest attraction is its vitality, most apt to the theme of spring.

The medieval Latin poems [...] are full of vivid pictures and evocations of springtime which were most happily reproduced in the music.

The first chorus, following an orchestral introduction, was an outburst of joy of living, sung with spontaneous spirit by the choir.

Catullus's 'Lament for his Mistress's Sparrow' introduced a note of sorrow carried on into a beautiful little orchestral elegy, but the spring scene returned in lines about bird-song and young love. A number of men's voices was balanced by a delicate lilting "Hymn to Cypris" for women [...] one of the poems was used as a text for an instrumental nocturne.

The work ends with a quiet epilogue and the prayer for the happy ones for those "Who travail without hope".

Mr Leighton's writing for the voices is grateful to the ear, for he gives them melodic lines that are vocally conceived, and any difficulty the singers may have in mastering the not easy parts is rewarded because they tell so well.

The orchestral texture is also conceived as support or complement to the voices, not as a rival.

Conductor and performers and Mr Kenneth Leighton received a warm, and well deserved ovation.<sup>47</sup>

The *Oxford Magazine* also reported on the concert and the 'freshness and vitality of Kenneth Leighton's *Veris Gratia* [*sic*], written especially for the Eglesfield Musical Society by one of Oxford's most promising young composers',<sup>48</sup> going on to talk about the 'exuberant melodic invention which has stamped Leighton's earlier works coupled, now, with a more mature sense of the unity and development of the whole.'<sup>49</sup>

Leighton himself wrote of the two different versions of *Veris Gratia*.

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<sup>47</sup> C. T., Review from the *Oxford Mail*, (The Oxford Mail, 15 June 1951).

<sup>48</sup> R. D.-H., Review from the *Oxford Magazine* (Date unknown).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



*Veris Gratia* was composed in two versions during 1950 when the composer was a student at Oxford, and particularly for Gerald Finzi and the Newbury String Players, who were a great source of inspiration and encouragement at that time. The first version is the suite for oboe, cello and strings and the second version a cantata with chorus and soloists, written for Bernard Rose and the Eglesfield Choral Society. Both works were quickly performed in 1951, and the suite has been heard several times in the south of England in more recent years. Jacqueline du Pré and Celia Nicklin were the soloists in a most memorable performance a few years later.<sup>50</sup>

The cantata received one further performance, before becoming almost forgotten until the 1990s: in December 1952 the Deal and Walmer Handelian Society performed it when Leighton was Professor of Harmony at the Royal Marine School of Music. It was performed alongside Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* as a celebration of the composer's eightieth birthday.

The remaining works that Leighton composed in Oxford are detailed in the composition books. There is a slight slowing down of pace in the early part of the year 1951, possibly as his time was drawing to a close in Oxford and his efforts needed to be concentrated more towards study and final examinations for the B.Mus. degree. The first work listed in the composition books for this year is a further arrangement of the song *If you were the only girl on the world*, this time for piano duet, but more noticeable is the return to song-writing.

The song cycle *Six Songs of Spring* was assembled and completed in January 1951, the earliest song from the set being noted as composed in August the previous year (*The Cherry Tree*) in the composition books. The first performance of this short cycle was given in Oxford in 1951 by Bernard Rose with Leighton at the piano. It is the first of Leighton's songs to specify a voice type, and although the voice part is noted in the treble clef he asks

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<sup>50</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Veris Gratia* – unpublished note (date unknown).



for a baritone. The subject of spring is very much a recurring theme in Leighton's works as a student, although the texts used here are not classical, but closer to the poets that he used in his earliest songs as a schoolboy from 1945 onwards.

The poets in *Six Songs of Spring* are all English apart from one, who is Irish: Alfred Edward Housman (The Cherry Tree), James Joyce (O Cool is the Valley Now), Walter de la Mare (To the April Moon), Francis Thompson (A May Burden), John Masefield (Beauty) and Rupert Brooke (Spring Sorrow). A varied collection of texts is echoed with a broad selection of diverse songs. Between the composing of his previous song in June 1949 (*In the dark pinewood*) and the first of this short cycle in August 1950 is the largest gap in Leighton's song writing from the beginning of the composition books. In fact after this cycle and the subsequent cycle, *Five Shakespeare Songs*, also completed early in 1951, Leighton was not to use this medium of solo voice and piano again until the composition of *Earth Sweet Earth... (Laudes Terrae)* Opus 94 begun in 1985, which was a response to a commission.<sup>51</sup>

*Six Songs of Spring* is followed immediately in the composition books by *Five Shakespeare Songs*. The entry in the composition books is for *Six Shakespeare Songs*, but the song *O Mistress Mine* was later removed from the set, and the manuscript is labelled *Five Shakespeare Songs*. The songs were written between February and March of 1951 along with two further

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<sup>51</sup> *Earth Sweet Earth... (Laudes Terrae)* Opus 94 was commissioned by Neil Mackie in memory of Sir Peter Pears.

songs – *Down by the Salley Gardens* and *Far in a Western Brookland*.<sup>52</sup> The *Five Shakespeare Songs* represent Leighton's most advanced song writing up to this point in time, although they still represent a fairly derivative style. This group of songs from the early part of the year 1951 was to be one of his last explorations of what we have seen to be his more youthful and English style. The music is typically in the style of the prominent English song composers of the time, with elements of Roger Quilter, Finzi, Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells in each of the five songs, with just occasional glimmers of a more mature Leighton.

The texts that Leighton used in this cycle are from a wide variety of Shakespeare's works although all but one of the texts had been set previously by important English composers including those mentioned above. The five texts are: *Fear no more the heat o' the sun* (from *Cymbeline*, Act IV, scene 2), previously set by Vaughan Williams, Finzi (in *Let us Garlands Bring*), and Quilter; *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day* (Sonnet XVIII); *Sigh no more, ladies* (from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act II, scene 3), set by Quilter and Warlock; *Come away, death* (from *Twelfth Night*, Act II, scene 4), set by Stanford, Parry, Vaughan Williams, Finzi (again in *Let us Garlands Bring*) and Quilter; and *Under the Greenwood Tree* (from *As You Like it*, Act II, scene 5), set by Parry, Ivor Gurney, Howells and Quilter. The songs are – like the *Six Songs of Spring* – specified for baritone and piano and were again premiered (possibly at around the same time as the *Six Songs of Spring*) by Bernard Rose with Leighton at the piano in Oxford in 1951.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. *Down by the Salley Gardens* is listed before the *Six Shakespeare Songs* and *Far in a Western Brookland* is listed afterwards.

The two individual songs that appear alongside the entry for the *Five Shakespeare Songs* in the composition books – *Down by the Salley Gardens* directly before and *Far in a western brookland* directly afterwards – are certainly worthy of note. *Down by the Salley Gardens* is the first song listed, the text is by William Butler Yeats and is average in terms of length, with two verses of through-composed music. The four stanzas of *Far in a western brookland* appear mostly through-composed, with the two outer verses being closely related, and the song is of a similar length to *Down by the Salley Gardens*.

As a result of being a published composer and winner of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, press coverage of Leighton's burgeoning career begins to become apparent. One paper had the headline 'Wakefield student gains famous music award'<sup>53</sup>, the article containing a brief survey of Leighton's career to that point. A newspaper local to Leighton, *The Wakefield Express*, contained a short article detailing the publication of 'a piano sonata and a violin sonata'<sup>54</sup> by Lengnick. A short reference to the *Piano Sonata No. 1 Opus 2* in *Music* from 1951, reports that it contains a 'wealth of ideas and makes exuberant use of the sonorities of the piano'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Anon., *Wakefield student gains famous music award*, (publication and date unknown).

<sup>54</sup> Anon., *Young Composer*, (*Wakefield Express*, date unknown).

<sup>55</sup> Anon., *Piano Sonata No. 1* (*Music*, 1951).



**Illustration 2.i:** Photograph of Kenneth Leighton c. 1951 (photographer credit unknown)





### **Orchestral Music (including works with chorus and soloists)**

Among all of Leighton's compositions from his time at Oxford there are a certain number that stand out above the rest as perhaps being more than just experimental. Of these works, most fall under this category of orchestral music, while the remainder can be grouped as the published works for piano and violin and piano. During Leighton's time at Oxford, he wrote six works that still exist that can be grouped together under the orchestral category, only two of which are published. The six works are the *Scherzo Festivo*, the *Overture in F minor for Full Orchestra*, the *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3, *Hippolytus* Opus 8, the *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings* Opus 9 and the *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6, which were composed in this order. The two works that were published are the *Symphony for Strings*, published by Lengnick shortly after its composition and first performance by the Newbury String Players and the *Veris Gratia Suite* published much later by Novello in 1972.

These works provided some significant early exposure for Leighton. The two works for strings received important first performances from the Newbury String Players conducted by Gerald Finzi. While still unpublished today, an early performance of the *Veris Gratia Cantata* by the Kalmar Orchestra with the Eglesfield Musical Society gave some exposure to Leighton around Oxford. The *Scherzo Festivo*, which as far as is known was never performed, received some exposure as the recipient of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award, although the exact date of this award and any further details are not known. Finally, *Hippolytus*, while also never performed, gave some publicity to the young Leighton in being the winning entry for the Mendelssohn Scholarship.

These six remaining works for orchestral forces are all of differing size, length and construction. Only one of these works (the *Symphony for Strings*) is in a traditional fast-slow-fast arrangement of three movements. Each other work consists of only one movement (as in the *Scherzo Festivo* and *Overture in F minor*, although there is evidence to suggest they both originally consisted of more than one movement), have more than three movements, or in the case of *Hippolytus*, on an even larger scale. The suite and cantata versions of *Veris Gratia* are made up of four and ten movements respectively.

*Hippolytus* is the most extensive work in this category, and for Leighton represents a summing up of all of his achievements and developments as a composer thus far. As an entry for a composition award such as the Mendelssohn Scholarship it was necessary for Leighton to showcase his own abilities in this way, and it was probably this that accounted for the considerable resources required for this work. As well as soloists, chorus and orator, Leighton's orchestra also contains the piano. The use of an orator displays the dramatic element of this work which is subtitled as a 'Dramatic Cantata', and in his own selective list of works that Leighton made towards the end of his life, it made its way into the 'Opera' category, along with just one other work, *Columba* Opus 77, an opera in three acts that he completed in 1980.

In realising the English translation of Euripides's play, Leighton has been able to let each section of the scoring have their own particular moments in *Hippolytus*, rather neatly showing his flexibility in being able to write for each particular group. This being said, the scoring revolves to a large extent around the string section, which was the medium



favoured by Leighton among his early works. In some ways the employment of each group of instruments individually is fairly obvious, in demonstrating the techniques he had learnt for each separate section of his orchestra and chorus, and there are few places where all these resources become combined together to create a *tutti*. Certain points of interest are found in the way that Leighton uses each aspect of the scoring. The part for orator, found towards the end of the work at the 'Death of Hippolytus' is found with no suggested rhythm and over a repetitive cello rising and falling broken chord and an improvisatory clarinet part (Ex. 2.1). Also, the unusual combination of horns, lower strings and contralto solo can be observed (Ex. 2.2), while the contralto can later on be seen accompanied by oboes, clarinets and bassoons (Ex. 2.3). The sparing use of orchestral *tutti*, however, is reserved for the most appropriate and climactic sections of the text. Leighton also appears to be particularly responsive in scoring accompaniments for his soloists, both instrumental and vocal.

Ex. 2.1: *Hippolytus* Opus 8 – *Oration – Death of Hippolytus*, bars 1 to 8

The musical score for Ex. 2.1 is written for five parts: Clarinet (Bb), Bassoon, Horns, ORATOR, and Cello/Bass. The tempo is marked **ANDANTE**. The key signature has one flat (Bb). The time signature is 2/4. The Orator part has the lyrics "I stand by the bank of brackish sea we stood". The Cello/Bass part has a repetitive broken chord pattern marked *ppp*. The Horns part has a repetitive broken chord pattern marked *pp*. The Clarinet and Bassoon parts have improvisatory lines. The score is divided into four measures.





Ex. 2.3: *Hippolytus* Opus 8 – Duet (Nurse and Phaedra), bars 1 to 15

Handwritten musical score for *Hippolytus* Opus 8, Duet (Nurse and Phaedra), bars 1 to 15. The score is written on five staves. The top staff is for Soprano, the second for Alto, the third for Tenor, the fourth for Bass, and the fifth for Bass. The lyrics are written below the staves. The music is in 2/4 time and features a duet between the Soprano and Alto parts.

In referring to the *Veris Gratia Suite*, Leighton states that 'Close analysis seems to be completely out of place with regard to such spontaneous and youthful music, but the poems are crucial'.<sup>56</sup> He is referring to the poems quoted at the top of each movement from *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics* that influence each movement: the first movement quotation reads 'Do thou, O spring most fair,/Squander thy care/On flower and leaf and grain./— Leave me alone with pain!';<sup>57</sup> the second movement is annotated with 'Joyously return again/Singing-birds in chorus,/Spring is in our way again,/new delight before us./O youth, be gay!/Green is on every spray,/And April, sweet of breath,/The old earth garnisheth';<sup>58</sup> the third with 'In this fair valley,/Fragrant and sweet,/Is a bright valley/With lilies deep,/ Where the gay blackbird/Pipes all day long,/Sweetness recordeth/The nightingale's

<sup>56</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Veris Gratia* – unpublished note (date unknown).

<sup>57</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 (London: Novello and Co. Ltd, 1972), 1; also Waddell, Helen, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics – Fifth Edition* (London: Constable, 1966), 156-157.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 18 & 215.



song';<sup>59</sup> and the quotation of the final movement reads: 'Then let us praise together/This earth that is new-stirred,/And happy be the lover/Who knows his prayer is heard,/By grace of Her/Whose altars fragrant are/With flowers new blown./And God have pity on the sadder folk,/Who travail without hope!'<sup>60</sup> Of the four movements in the suite, only one has a subtitle: the final movement is entitled *Epilogo*, although the reduction for two pianos of the second movement was published as a *Scherzo*.

In the *Veris Gratia Cantata*, Leighton has attempted to vary and balance the layout of this substantial work among the scoring of its ten movements. The layout is as follows: *Prelude* (strings and flute), *Aubade* (flute, timpani, chorus and strings), *Lament for his mistress's sparrow* (flute, tenor solo, strings), *Elegy* (flute and strings), *Eclogue* (flute, soprano solo and chorus), *Paeon* (solo flute and piccolo, timpani, chorus, and strings), *Hymn to Cypris* (flute, soprano and alto *divisi*, and strings), *Erotikon* (flute, solo tenor and strings), *Nocturne* (flute, timpani and strings) and *Epilogue* (flute, timpani, chorus and strings). The links between this and previous works in all mediums (including choral, orchestral and instrumental), are plentiful. A number of the movements make use of musical material extracted from previous works he had written earlier on in his time at Oxford. The most notable of these are from the *Epilogo* movement of the suite of the same name (Ex. 2.4i & ii), the music of the carol *Lully, Lulla thou little tiny child* set to a new Latin text (Ex. 2.5 and see Ex. 2.12). This suggests, as already stated above, that the cantata was compiled hastily – begun and completed in the same month – and Josephine Leighton has also suggested in conversation that it was indeed assembled quickly using anything that he had available that he

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 43 & 235.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 56 & 217.

considered suitable for the task. In this way, however, it is similar to *Hippolytus* in a summing up of his achievements as a composer.

Ex. 2.4i: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings Opus 9 – Epilogo*, bars 1 to 5

SOSTENUTO, MA CON MOTO. (♩ = ca. 62)

Ex. 2.4ii: *Veris Gratia Cantata Opus 6 – Epilogue*, bars 1 to 6



Ex. 2.5: *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6 – *Eclogue*, bars 1 to 4

The musical score for Ex. 2.5 shows the first four bars of the *Eclogue* from *Veris Gratia Cantata*. It is a vocal ensemble piece with parts for Alto, Soprano Solo, Soprano, Contralto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are: "Hu - sa - ve - ut car - ni - se del - ci - no - du - la - ni - se". The music is in a simple, homophonic style with a clear melodic line in the Soprano Solo part and supporting parts for the other voices.

There are various common factors that unite these works and characterise Leighton's early style, but in some cases also highlight the shortcomings of a composer at the very beginning of his career. There can be a mild sense of predictability throughout these early works, with patterns that repeat themselves. Perhaps the most obvious of these is found at the opening of four out of the six works in this group, which all see a similar arrangement of soft sustained lower strings that builds gradually upwards through the string parts, with imitative entries. A falling figure, combined with these imitative entries that rise through the string section, unites the openings of both the *Symphony for Strings* and the *Veris Gratia Suite* in particular (Ex. 2.6i & ii).

Ex. 2.6i: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 1, bars 1 to 5

The musical score for Ex. 2.6i shows the first five bars of the first movement of the *Symphony for Strings*. The tempo is marked 'ADAGIO' and the time signature is 4/4. The score is for a string ensemble with parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The music is characterized by a gradual build-up of the string parts, with the Violin I part leading the melody and the other parts following in a similar pattern. The dynamics are marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'p' (piano).



Ex. 2.6ii: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 1, bars 1 to 9

*Lento Sostenuto. (♩ = ca. 44)*

The musical score is for the first movement of the *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe, Cello and Strings*, Opus 9, by Leighton. The tempo is *Lento Sostenuto* with a quarter note equal to approximately 44 beats per minute. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of seven staves: Oboe, Violincello, 1st Violin, 2nd Violin, Violas, Cellos, and Bass. The Oboe and Violincello parts are mostly rests. The strings play a slow, sustained melody. The Viola part is marked 'div.' and 'pp'. The Cello and Bass parts are marked 'pp' and 'p'. The Oboe part is marked 'p'.

The reasons why Leighton wrote mostly for strings at this point in his development is unclear. Bernard Rose may well have advised his young student to begin with smaller structures, or it may have been a conscious decision on Leighton's part to master smaller scores as a precursor to larger ones. In spite of whoever was behind this decision, it proved to be a successful one, with these earlier works for smaller forces being much more worthy of note than those for full orchestra, while also being the only ones performed at the time or since then. The string writing itself can at times be seen to have been conceived at the

piano, as a simple reduction onto two staves demonstrates (Ex. 2.7 and See Appendix: vocal score of *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6)

Ex. 2.7: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 1, bars 41 to 51

As is somewhat expected, Leighton's use of the full orchestra in both the *Overture* and *Scherzo Festivo* shows little complexity or much of an accomplished technique, although there appears to be a keen sense of variation and experimentation with colour in his use of instrumental combinations. Other than this, the orchestral texture does not vary particularly frequently in either of the works; however, the later of the two, *Overture*, does display some progression, with more continuous variation. The impact made by the opening of each work is rather different. While not having an ascending figure through the strings, the *Scherzo* has a similar rising figure, which ascends through the woodwind section (Ex. 2.8). From the opening bars of the *Overture*, an increased sense of the possibilities for different textures is evident, each playing an individual role in the opening 10 bars leading up to a quick climax (Ex. 2.9).



Ex. 2.8: *Scherzo Festivo for Orchestra* (1948) – bars 1 to 7

*MAESTRO CON BRAVURA* *Allegro molto*

Flute II  
Oboe I  
Clarinet II  
Bassoon II  
Solo

Ex. 2.9: *Overture in F Minor for full Orchestra* (1950) – bars 5 to 8

Flute II  
Oboe I  
Clarinet II  
Bassoon II  
Solo



Repetitive figures are vital within Leighton's early music in general as a basic method of extension, although particularly with a significant number of instruments found in the works for strings and full orchestra. A typical figure that Leighton uses in repetition can be seen close to the opening of the *Overture in F minor* (Ex. 2.10); it is a figure which is heard rather too often in the remainder of the piece, although it is incorporated quite cleverly into some of the melodic material of the work (Ex. 2.11). Recurring ostinato-like figures used by Leighton are typically found in accompaniment textures, while the melodic material interacts closely with it, the interest provided off-setting this rather basic technique (Ex. 2.12i and ii).

Ex. 2.10: *Overture in F Minor for full Orchestra* (1950) – bars 13 to 16



Ex. 2.11: *Overture in F Minor for full Orchestra* (1950) – bars 103 to 107

Ex. 2.12i: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 1, bars 74 to 79

Ex. 2.12ii: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 1, bars 60 to 63

Leighton appears to be quite aware of the importance of musical unity within movements and works, and regularly enhances this with the use of recurring figures and basic cyclical elements. In these early works for orchestra, this technique includes the close relation of themes to one another, as well as the recurrence of themes between separate movements. This sense of musical economy was vital to his rapid early development: short figures both rhythmic and melodic could be used differently and even transformed. The difference, for example, between the viola figure at bar six of the first movement of the *Veris Gratia Suite*



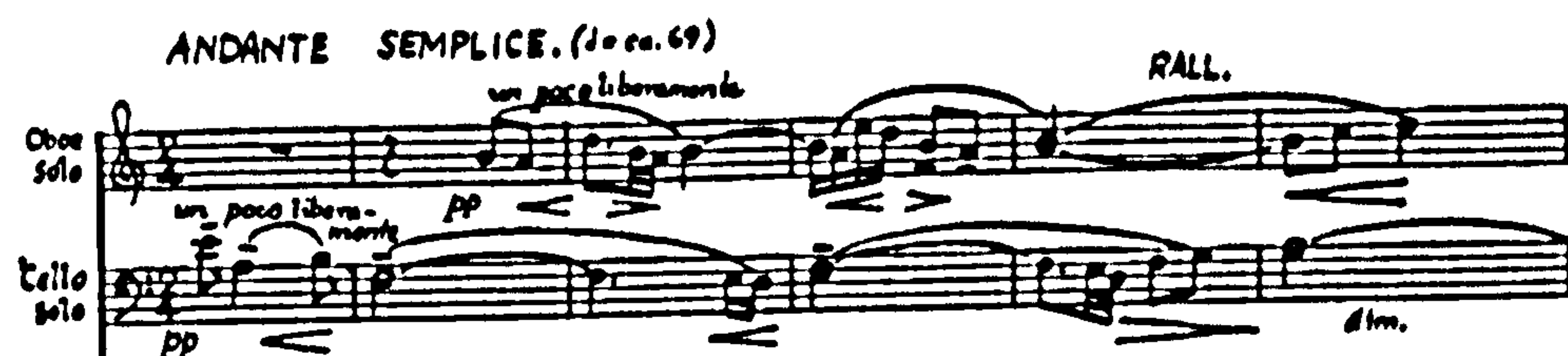
and the first violin figure between bars two and three of the second movement is obvious when heard yet the rhythmic and melodic pattern is the same (Ex. 2.13i & ii).

Ex. 2.13i: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings Opus 9* – movement 1, bars 5 to 9

Ex. 2.13ii: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings Opus 9* – movement 2, bars 1 to 4

The different execution of the figure with different speeds and moods makes for an almost subconscious realisation that the two are related. Leighton also makes use of more obvious examples of this alliance between movements: in the same suite, the opening figure found in the cello is heard stated by the soloists in turn at the beginning of the third movement (Ex. 2.14 and see Ex. 2.6ii).

Ex. 2.14: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 3, bars 1 to 6



The harmonic language in each of these six works is particularly similar, and on the surface shows the influence of several composers already named by Leighton as important to his development, in particular Vaughan Williams and Finzi. The last movement of the *Veris Gratia Suite* was described by Leighton as ‘a clear but unconscious tribute to his [Finzi’s] melodic style’.<sup>61</sup> There are a number of features that had helped to define his style up to that point, most notably the intense lyrical quality of much of his writing as well as the wide range of his melodic lines. The opening solo line of the cello from the *Veris Gratia Suite* demonstrates this important feature of the work, but is also a defining characteristic of Leighton’s mature style (Ex. 2.15). In general Leighton’s language shows certain Romantic characteristics at this point: the lyrical aspect in particular, the rich and often luscious quality of musical textures employed, the subtle and occasional use of dissonance at pertinent points, and a generally expressive and often passionate character.

Ex 2.15: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 1, bars 18 to 27



<sup>61</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Memories of Gerald Finzi*, from the Finzi Trust Friends’ Newsletter (1988).



The lyrical aspect is a feature of each work in this section at some point, apart from the *Scherzo*, where melodic line is not necessarily the main consideration of the work. The slow movement of the *Symphony for Strings* provides many further examples of this, often combined with a particularly pianistic accompaniment from the remainder of the strings (Ex. 2.16i and ii):

Ex. 2.16i: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 2, bars 4 to 7

Ex. 2.16ii: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 2, bars 108 to 110

Throughout the substantial introduction of *Symphony for Strings*, many further techniques that Leighton was beginning to master are present. As well as chromatic and whole-tone writing, also found in the earlier piano works, there is a clear and confident use of bitonality and contrapuntal techniques. Chromatic and whole-tone writing continue well into the movement and the rest of the work, and are often juxtaposed against one another (Ex. 2.17)

Ex. 2.17: *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 – movement 2, bars 36 to 39



The tonality of the introduction of the opening movement of *Symphony for Strings* is constantly shifting with the result being, typically, no specific key. In the first few bars alone the music shifts from F minor to E flat major (with an augmented fifth) to C minor (with a D in the bass) and back to E flat major, loosely suggesting F minor. This regularly shifting key and ambiguity of tonic can also be observed at some point in all the works. This technique is found most obviously in the *Epilogo* final movement of the *Veris Gratia Suite*, much of the music material of which is shared with the final movement of the *Veris Gratia Cantata*.

Rhythmic techniques used by Leighton in these six orchestral works could be described as sound, although not particularly complex or adventurous. At times there is predictability in the rhythmic qualities, with very few changes of time signature or any ambiguity as to the metre. The rhythmic qualities of Leighton's work at this time are linked strongly with the repetitive figures that are vital in the construction and extended nature of each work. In the *Veris Gratia Suite*, the quaver-crotchet-quaver rhythm is particularly important, and was one of the few aspects that link these youthful works with his later, developed musical style (Ex. 2.18).



Ex. 2.18: *Veris Gratia Suite for Oboe Cello and Strings* Opus 9 – movement 1, bars 74 to 79

Ob. *Un Poco Più Mosso. dolce*  
Vc. *pp*  
Vl. I *pizz. pp*  
Vl. II *pizz. pp*  
Va. *pp*

### Piano Music

As Leighton's own instrument, the piano was central to progress at this stage in his career as a composer. The above tables from each year of his time in Oxford display that he was composing for the piano in both solo and accompaniment forms almost constantly. Initially, much of this advancement in his piano style is to be found in the works for solo piano, when logically there are fewer restrictions than when accompanying another instrument or a voice.

Leighton's abilities as a pianist and obvious knowledge of much piano repertoire are mirrored in the often instinctive and innate abilities within the composition of his solo piano works – this is more instantly noticeable in later works, however the formation of a natural style is evident in these earlier compositions. Despite this, of the nine compositions for solo piano listed in the three composition books from his time at Oxford, six are lost,

meaning a complete survey is unfortunately not possible. Of those that remain only one is published – the *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2.

Compositions for solo piano and those that contain the piano were numerous throughout this period as a student; during his first academic year, 1947 to 1948, only one work of 14 composed does not contain the piano in its scoring. The pattern varies slightly over the following three academic years, but the piano is a dominant resource throughout; the academic year 1948 to 1949 has six works out of 15 composed that do not contain the piano, while the final two academic years contain three out of 10 and two out of eight respectively.<sup>62</sup> The three works that do survive from this time (*Toccata in 3 Movements*, *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* and *Piano Sonata in 2 Movements*) are all of a reasonably substantial scale – in particular the published *Sonata No. 1*. It would be reasonably safe to estimate the scale of some of the missing works by their similar titles, but anything more than this is impossible to tell. As for the solo piano writing itself, this began strongly with five works in his first year at Oxford, but tails off considerably with each passing year, as his experimentation with other genres deepened, with two solo piano works now lost from the year 1949 to 1950, and no solo piano works recorded as composed from the subsequent academic year. Of the three works that remain, the *Sonata No. 1* is the most interesting work, but all three have certain features in common.

As a still inexperienced composer, Leighton relied on a range of traditional techniques that prevented a large amount of his own creativity and originality from coming through. The

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<sup>62</sup> The calculation of works from Leighton's final academic year at Oxford does not include the following summer months, when he had begun study in Rome. Therefore it covers a slightly shorter period.



range of techniques is wide, however, and he does display a growing number of capabilities at this stage.

One of the most noticeable features of the three piano works from this period – particularly at the opening of movements and at the introduction of themes – is an ostinato accompaniment. This is also a predominant feature of the two earlier sonatinas in much the same way and Leighton uses both melodic and rhythmic ostinatos in his writing. Two of the four movements of the *Sonata No.1* and the opening of the later two-movement *Sonata* all begin with the introduction of a repetitive ostinato accompaniment; along with the Opus 1 sonatinas, this is used in one of two ways – beginning loudly and becoming softer towards the statement of the first subject theme, or beginning quietly (Ex. 2.19). More often than not the ostinato consists of a rapid repetitive broken-chord accompaniment, sometimes loud and sometimes soft; the alternative found in the third movement of the *Sonata No. 1* is a slow and soft oscillation between two chords. The earliest of the three remaining piano works from this time, the *Toccata in 3 Movements*, does not rely on the ostinato technique at the opening of each movement, but ostinatos are to be found at various points further into the music itself.

An additional important feature of Leighton's compositional style at this point (which is related to the abundant use of the ostinato) is the inclusion of much melodic and rhythmic imitative writing – this frequently used aspect, certainly in the early piano music, is a definite precursor to his subsequent prolific use of contrapuntal techniques. The majority of Leighton's early imitative writing is in the form of short sequences, which are found

perhaps a little too often, although providing a straightforward, yet effective, way to maximise the potential of his melodic material.

Ex. 2.19: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano Opus 2* – movement 1, bars 1 to 11

Allegro  $\text{♩} = \text{circa } 104$

PIANO

At this stage, however, imitative material within Leighton's works doesn't progress particularly far, and certainly not far enough as to be called counterpoint. In the second movement of the *Toccata*, fugal-like entries begin the movement, but there is no indication that these are anything more than just imitative entries with no further fugal writing. The final movement of the *Toccata* is entitled *Fuga*, and in a similar manner to the previous movement, the opening – and more extended – fugal entries do not flourish into a whole-scale fugue, instead containing much imitative writing and two-part invention (Ex. 2.20).

Ex. 2.20: *Toccata* (1947) – movement 3, bars 41 to 45



Being the earliest existing piano work from Oxford, the *Toccata* was not dissimilar to the earlier sonatinas, being of three movements in a fast-slow-fast arrangement and stylistically, in terms of progress, being more closely connected with the two Opus 1 works than to the *Sonata No. 1*. There is plenty of evidence from the composition books that Leighton was writing fugues for the piano, so it is definitely a skill that he was beginning to acquire, although all of the fugues that he wrote as a student are now lost. There are signs of a move towards a contrapuntal structure within his music, but this technique was at a formative stage within a larger overall structure in which development is a requirement.

An essential feature of Leighton's piano writing (and much of his other writing), is the way in which he creates unity between the different sections of both movements and works. This is mainly brought about through cyclical elements in which themes or characteristics are heard in more than one movement or section, such as the punctuating chords that accompany the similarly active themes at the beginning of the second and fourth movements of the first piano sonata (Ex. 2.21i & ii). This is also achieved by combining two or more different themes and accompaniment textures. Similar rhythms and shared ostinato accompaniments between movements are also part of the unifying aspects involved in one of his compositions.

There are a number of ways in which Leighton develops the melodic material within the movements of his piano works, consisting mainly of sequences, surrounding textures, using the full range of the piano, inversions, rhythmic alteration, fragmentation, diminution and augmentation. This considerable list would suggest that Leighton already had a large

number of compositional techniques open to him, and they did prove to be highly useful in bridging the obvious gaps in his abilities at such a young age.

Ex. 2.21i: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 2, bars 1 to 9

Scherzo: \* Presto (as fast as possible)

PIANO

*p*

*mf*

Ex. 2.21ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 4, bars 1 to 8

Rondo: Allegro molto e ritmico ♩ = 126-132

PIANO

*p*

*cresc.*

*p*

The use of sequences has been discussed a little already, but the opening of the *Toccata*, makes it evident just how heavily the technique is featured in these early works, almost at times becoming the whole structure of any kind of thematic development (Ex. 2.22). The considerable employment of the sequence as a means to develop melodic material is however a substantial aid to Leighton's lack of a key signature, which was a feature of the



majority of his works even at this early stage. A rapidly and often changing key is often helped by both rising and descending sequences, and in both steps and larger intervals.

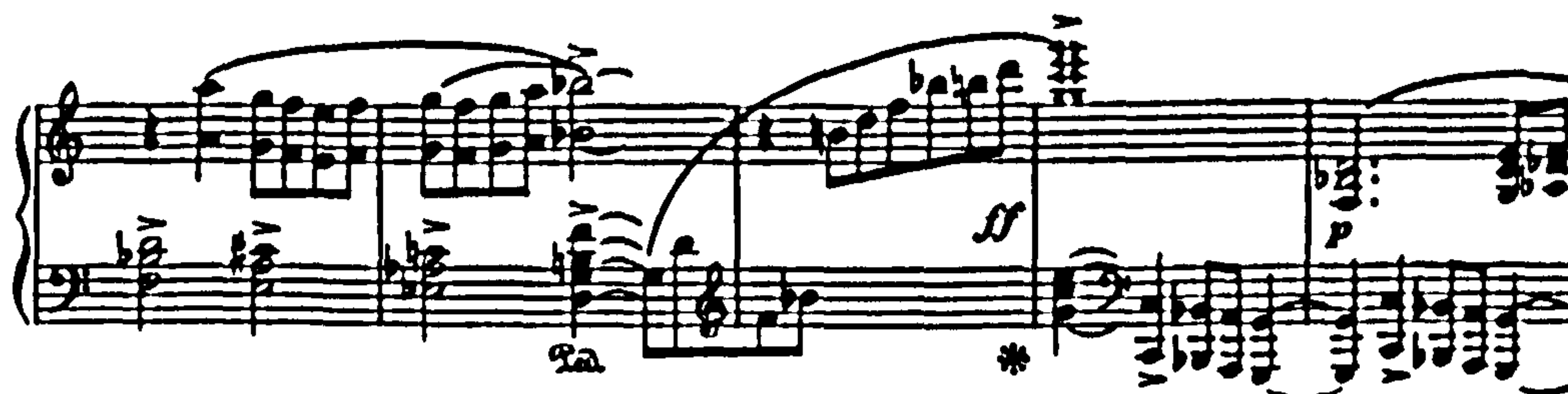
Ex. 2.22: *Toccata* (1947) – movement 1, bars 1 to 11

Leighton's use of different textures surrounding musical themes, and the range of the piano that he used are closely linked. He had learnt seemingly quite early on that musical material can be transformed easily by treating it slightly differently – this included transposing it to different areas of the piano, reversing the roles of the right and left hands, subjecting a theme to a different texture in the accompaniment or a combination of these. These techniques can be seen employed particularly in the *Sonata No. 1*, which begin to confirm its position as the most coherent of the three remaining piano works from this time; the first four notes of the opening theme of the first movement can be observed in the left hand of a broken-chord ostinato (Ex. 2.23i), restated in the right hand slightly altered and in octaves both from bar 19, and found much lower in the piano in the left hand below a parallel chordal accompaniment from bar 23 (Ex. 2.23ii).

Ex. 2.23i: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 1, bars 1 to 3



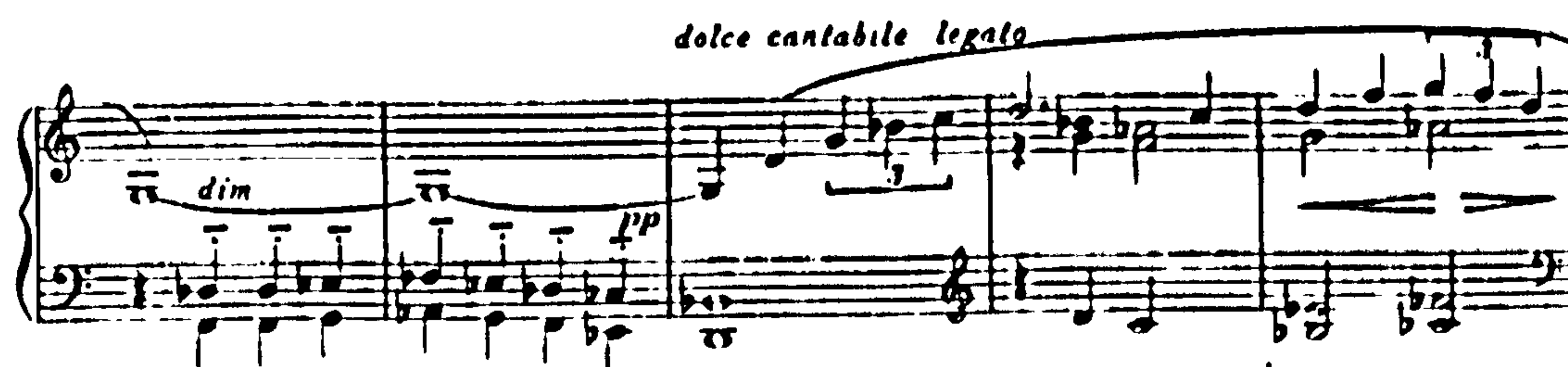
Ex. 2.23ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 1, bars 20 to 24



These techniques are further enhanced by the use of inversions, rhythmic and slight melodic alteration, and fragmentation. At certain points in the score of the *Sonata No. 1* these methods can clearly be observed, with fragments often finding their way into accompaniment textures as well as in the melodic aspects of a movement. In the final movement of that sonata, most of the above techniques can be seen individually and in combination. The opening right hand theme of the movement is found in octaves lower down in the piano, before being fragmented into a sequence; the *rondo* theme is slightly altered and augmented to become the right hand theme of the first episode at bar 39 (Ex. 2.24i), which is later found in inversion being used in a short sequence between the two hands from bar 57 (Ex. 2.24ii).



Ex. 2.24i: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 4, bars 37 to 41



Ex. 2.24ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 4, bars 57 to 60



Encapsulating many of these established techniques are frequent examples of conventional forms. Sonata form is a dominant aspect of much of Leighton's work; however, it is not so noticeable in its execution, with significantly extended versions leaving just the basic features of exposition, development and recapitulation remaining. A frequent part of this expansion involves an extended development of each theme before either the exposition of a second theme or the development section itself – the recapitulation of a movement is also extended to include a substantial coda that concludes the movement, in which the theme is sometimes found in a decorated guise.

All of the characteristics so far highlighted point towards a fairly traditional style, and one that is essentially Romantic, with few indications of a mature developing style. Stylistic points, which lead the listener away from Romanticism and that feature in Leighton's later and more developed style are, however, present. Among these there are the frequent

changes in time signature on an irregular basis and deliberately uneven phrasing that often lends an air of unpredictability, especially to his *scherzo* movements, whilst also being an early example of extended syncopation within his writing (see Ex. 2.21i). The *Scherzo and Trio* format itself was to become a common feature of later works and is used by Leighton for the first time in the *Sonata No. 1* (and, also from this time as a student, in the *Scherzo for Two Pianos* Opus 7) in the second movement. Marked '*Presto* (as fast as possible)'. This type of movement also brings to the fore his use of extremely detailed articulation, dynamics and phrasing that are present in each of his works. This detail found in all of Leighton's written scores, is indicative of his later style, and is clearly intended to be fully observed, requiring very rhythmic, and at times complex, musical abilities. As is traditional, Leighton's scherzos are followed by a contrasting trio, before a recapitulation of the opening scherzo. As the scherzo is often quick and playful in nature, the trios that follow are mostly much calmer and lyrical. Leighton's burgeoning lyrical melodic style is also obvious throughout much of his slower music, particularly in the trio, and the third movement of the *Sonata No. 1*.

Further forward-looking techniques include a prevalent use of chromatic movement – at this stage he only occasionally makes use of chromatic and dissonant harmony, but the constantly changing key is also often helped by chromatic movement between sections. This chromatic influence is regularly juxtaposed with whole-tone writing and an occasional modal quality, both of which can be found in the opening section of the *Scherzo and Trio* from the *Sonata No. 1* (Ex. 2.25). The emerging chromatic features of Leighton's writing are supported by the increasing use of certain intervals within both harmonic and melodic



material. The tritone, the diminished ninth (or second), and the major seventh are obvious ways of inserting some occasional dissonance into the music. Chords, or notes within phrases also show use of Neapolitan techniques, which serves to enhance the ambiguity of a tonic key that was to become customary in his style.

Ex. 2.25: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 2, bars 15 to 18



### Songs

Leighton's song-writing is inexorably linked to his piano output during his time as a student at Oxford. A constant progression in his abilities at the piano and as a composer for the instrument would have had a subsequent effect on writing for voice and piano, and perhaps even vice versa, with much experimentation in both. In looking at Leighton's output for voice and piano, a much more complete picture is available than that for solo piano, with only one song from this period being recorded as lost. At this stage, the pattern that can be observed with Leighton's song writing appears to consist of short bursts of activity followed by substantial gaps in production, providing a less constant output than when he was a schoolboy. The two most noticeable gaps are found between January and September of 1948, and between June 1949 and August 1950. There is one smaller space in which no songs were written, between August 1950 and January 1951.

When compared to the earliest of his songs, the increasing confidence that these later songs exude is obvious; the music manoeuvres in a much more effortless way, being much more adventurous and inventive in terms of harmony, lyricism and scale; these are now much more than just competent essays. The benefit of Leighton's forays into different forms of piano music – which require more inventiveness simply because of their increased length – can clearly be seen in the accompaniments of these later unpublished songs, although remaining much more conservative than some of his other music from this time. The majority of the songs are still very much miniatures, remaining of a similar length to his pre-Oxford works for voice and piano. The form of the songs also remains mostly strophic, and of between one and three stanzas in length. This strophic nature gives Leighton an ideal tool for variation within the music, with opportunities to vary the piano textures between verses, or in the longer songs to introduce a ternary ABA form with an independent central section, as in *To the April Moon* from the *Six Songs of Spring*. The differing textures and piano techniques used within the verses as well as between them are also indicative of a developing ability to respond intelligently to the texts and enhance the word painting of the vocal line. Further obvious variation can be found where the number of syllables differs between stanzas of the poetry used, with necessary amendments to be made to the melody or rhythm of the vocal part. One or two of the songs are still through-composed, and once again these provide the more interesting music.

The general style of Leighton's songs is still typically pastiche. The influence of twentieth-century English song composers can be found – an area of music that we know he was fascinated by – with traces of Gerald Finzi, John Ireland, Herbert Howells, Peter Warlock



and Roger Quilter. Leighton still sets a majority of texts already set by these composers, which cannot be put down to mere coincidence, with the majority of the poetry he used already being employed by one or more of the above composers. For example, he uses the same title of *Spring Sorrow* that John Ireland used in his own setting of 1918, whereas the original title of the poem was simply *Song*.

There is little of the mature Leighton in this genre of his composition, but the signs of a developing composer are found in the lyrical and word painting qualities of the vocal line, the confident use of a wide vocal range, occasional ambiguity of metre within the construction, a continuation of his constantly precise and detailed performance instructions. More specifically within the piano parts themselves the subtle use of dissonance helps to exaggerate particular words in the text, for example in *Come away, death* from the *Five Shakespeare Songs* (Ex. 2.26). Also to be observed in the piano writing is a significant reduction in the use of straightforward chordal harmony, while remaining musically economical and not particularly extravagant (Ex. 2.27).

Ex. 2.26: *Five Shakespeare Songs* (1951): *Come away, death* – bars 1 to 6

LETO MA NON TROPPO (con molto sentimento) come a-way, come a-

Voice

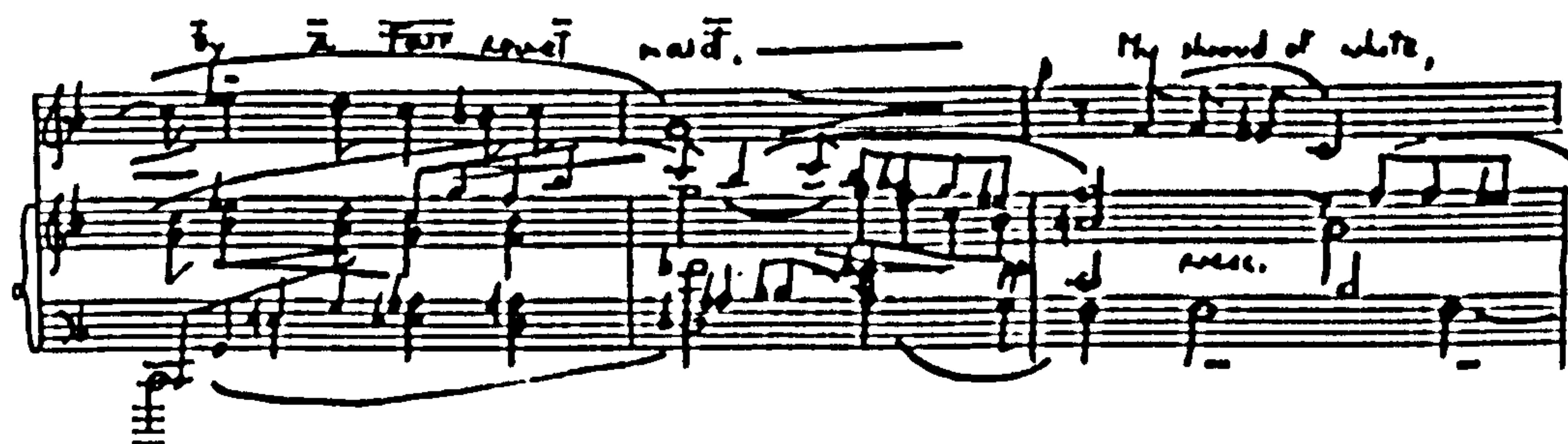
Piano

(cresc.)

-way, death And in sadcy pass let me be laid;

for the sake of me.

Ex. 2.27: *Five Shakespeare Songs* (1951): *Come away, death* – bars 10 to 12



Of the two songs that Leighton wrote around the composition of the first piano sonata towards the end of 1948 (*Go, lovely rose* and *To Daffodils*), *Go, lovely rose* shows some very effective piano writing alongside a developing harmonic flair (Ex. 2.28). When looking at Leighton's songs as a whole, it would appear that he is more comfortable setting texts that suggest a slower, more profound and expressive quality, with very few songs of a livelier nature and faster tempos.

Ex. 2.28: *Go Lovely Rose* (1948) – bars 17 to 24



The *Six Songs of Spring* are all quite individual, but, as is evident in the piano works of this period, there are various things which unify the cycle as a whole. In most of the songs there is a little blurring as to whether the songs are strophic or through-composed, with aspects of each technique being incorporated. *Beauty* is the only one that can be called strophic as such – with two stanzas, the melody is altered to accommodate the words of the second verse, with a substantially different accompaniment providing some disguising of its similarity to the first verse. Unusually (by this stage in Leighton's development as a composer) four out of the six songs have key signatures. This association with a particular key could be seen as something of a small backward step in his development, but this is mostly counterbalanced with liberal use of accidentals and no particular restriction to a tonic key. The key relations themselves between the songs of the *Six Songs of Spring* would indicate that the cycle was compiled from individual songs rather than written as a cycle, with no particular progression – this is particularly evident with the transition between D flat major and D major between *Beauty* and *Spring Sorrow*. The main unifying aspect of these songs, however, is the use of an almost constant quaver movement in the piano accompaniment textures, which provides a simple and effective link between of the songs, the one exception being *Beauty*.

In the final songs from his time at Oxford, *Five Shakespeare Songs*, there is more evidence than in the *Six Songs of Spring* that the songs were composed and intended as a short cycle. The fact that the texts are from the same author is a strong indicator of this, as well as the fact that none of the individual songs is referred to anywhere previously in the composition books as opposed to the earlier cycle. The key relationships between the

songs are also much more considered in the *Five Shakespeare Songs*, with perhaps only one slightly awkward shift, from a chord of D major to a chord of E flat major, occurring between *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day* and *Sigh no more, ladies*. The harmonic and melodic characters help to tie the songs of the set together even though there is enough variation to maintain interest.

There are certain similarities and also developments evident when comparing the *Six Songs of Spring* and the *Five Shakespeare Songs*. These five songs are still quite derivative of English song, while maintaining a mainly strophic construction as in the earlier set. In *Five Shakespeare Songs*, four of the five songs have a key signature, a similar proportion to the *Six Songs of Spring* and in this case, although the songs don't deviate too much from the implied tonics, they don't necessarily adhere to them, the faster tempo songs being generally more centred on a particular key. A continuous quaver motion in the piano accompaniment that was used to give the *Six Songs of Spring* a sense of fluidity is still used in these slightly later songs but is not as vivid and dominating as its earlier application. Overall the accompaniment textures are much more varied and appropriate to the word setting here, being the most advanced accompaniment in this medium up to this point.

The five songs are quite neatly balanced in terms of mood. The opening introduction of *Fear no more the heat o' the sun*, which opens the set, is dark, quiet and sombre – the chromaticism and weaving of the lines more reminiscent of the mature Leighton; it is also the only song of the set not to possess a key signature (Ex. 2.29).



Ex. 2.29: *Five Shakespeare Songs* (1951): *Fear no more the heat o' the sun* – bars 1 to 4



The *Five Shakespeare Songs* are the only songs from those that Leighton wrote between 1945 and 1951 to be performed on a fairly regular basis today. Even though they can be seen as integral to the early part of Leighton's catalogue they don't particularly represent Leighton as a developed composer.

### Choral Music

The field of choral music is fairly sparse within Leighton's output as a student, but it does provide one of his most significant and perhaps readily recognisable works. In looking through the above tables, we find that the composition of choral works did not begin until December of his second academic year at Oxford, with the *Three Carols for Mixed Voices*. With no existing manuscripts or records of choral writing before this, it also represents his first attempts at choral writing as far as is known.

The remaining choral works from the academic year 1948 to 1949 (*The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *Missa Brevis* and *Pater Noster*), represent Leighton's only original works specifically and solely for choral forces from this period. Following this academic year, there are two works that contain choral forces (*Hippolytus* Opus 8 and *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6), with

an arrangement of a song for men's voices (*If you were the only girl in the world*) and a hymn tune, which, although lost, would most likely have been intended to be sung in four parts.

Of the four choral entries in the composition book from 1948 to 1949, most of the works are experimental with one which stands out from the rest as being of a much higher quality, *Lully, lulla thou little tiny child*, the first of the *Three Carols*. It also proved to be a versatile piece, with some of the musical material from the work being included in the later *Veris Gratia Cantata*, with a pastoral Latin text.

In its original version *Lully, lulla* demonstrates a natural ability to write for voices and uses the text of the well-known fifteenth-century carol; also well-known as 'The Coventry Carol', the text is taken from the 'Pageant of the Shearman and Tailors' of a Coventry mystery play. The part writing here flows effortlessly and this scoring of four-part (SATB) choir with soprano soloist was to be a frequently used and favourite combination in later choral works, including the two later carols with which it was eventually published alongside, *The Star-song* and *An ode on the birth of our saviour*, collectively allocated Opus number 25.

There are certain links with other works from this period, the most obvious being the use of an ostinato at the opening of the piece (Ex. 2.30).



Ex. 2.30: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 1 to 3

The musical score for Ex. 2.30 is for the piece 'Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child' Opus 25b, bars 1 to 3. It is written for five voices: Soprano Solo, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The tempo is 'Andante (sullante)' and the mood is 'p dolce'. The lyrics are 'Lu - lly, lu - lla, thou' for the Soprano Solo and 'Lu - lly, lu - lla, lu - lly, lu - lla, lu - lly, lu - lla, lu -' for the other four voices. The score shows a gentle rocking motion in the accompaniment, which is the basis of the entire construction.

It could be argued that this was actually the most effective use of the ostinato technique in this period of Leighton's compositions, providing some inspired word-painting depicting a lullaby through the gentle rocking motion. This seemingly simple idea permeates the entire piece, forming the basis of almost the entire construction; this musical economy twinned with the rich harmonic sense is symptomatic of a more mature Leighton beginning to emerge.

Aside from the impression of a gently rocking accompaniment heard at the opening of the work, word-painting is also found in other areas of the carol; in a similar manner to Leighton's songs, dissonance creeps in, twinned with precise and expressive articulation and dynamic markings to emphasise particular words within the text, most notably at the word 'slay' (Ex. 2.31). An occasional use of irregular phrases, time signatures and a flexible key all serve to enhance the important syllables, accommodating the spoken qualities of the text.

Ex. 2.31: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 31 to 34

Tempo I  
(SOPRANO SOLO) *pesspress.*

That wee- is me, wee- is me, Poor child, for

Tempo I

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

Tempo I

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

*fz* slay, *pp* to slay. *fz* That

Within the strophic element of *Lully, lulla* there is a clearly defined and lucid structure, unified by the opening ostinato material, which recurs throughout the work; a rondo in miniature is almost created, with the recurring ostinato material representing a soothing and reassuring aspect of the work. The harmonic composition of the carol supports the overall structure, a feature which isn't necessarily echoed by the remaining carols of the original set of *Three Carols*, which are noticeably weaker compositions; Leighton was probably in no way hesitant to remove *Lully, lulla* from its original set of three carols when it came to resurrecting it. As the original manuscript is lost, it is not clear if Leighton made any modifications to the original version of the carol when it was published.

Within the features of each of the three carols, the harmony includes certain elements that are becoming increasingly common in Leighton's work, including the use of sevenths and ninths (or seconds) within the harmony, parallel writing, consecutive fifths and unprepared suspensions (Ex. 2.32).



Ex. 2.32: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 14 to 16

day? This poor young-ling For whom we sing, —

day? This poor young-ling For whom we sing, —

day? This poor young-ling For whom we sing, —

day? This poor young-ling For whom we sing, —

The work is brought succinctly to a close with a final twist in the harmonic movement, which takes the ending slightly unexpectedly into the dominant, E major. The relief of this resolution happens after a slightly extended cadence, which features an unpredictable chordal progression. This progression adds a last reminder of the tension in the work as a whole, before the dissonance in the penultimate chord leads into an assured absolution (Ex. 2.33).

Ex. 2.33: *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* Opus 25b – bars 41 to 45

by, lu-lly, lu-lly, — lu-lly, — lu-lly, —

lly, lu-lly, lu-lly, — lu-lly, — lu-lly, —

lly, lu-lly, lu-lly, — lu-lly, — lu-lly, —

lly, lu-lly, lu-lly, — lu-lly, — lu-lly, —

lly, lu-lly, lu-lly, — lu-lly, — lu-lly, —

Of the remaining choral works from this time as a student, there are no other works that warrant much discussion; there are, however, one or two points to be raised about the

progressive style found within them – the larger works that contain choral forces (*Hippolytus* and *Veris Gratia*) will be discussed in the next chapter. On the whole, however, a not particularly interesting chordal and one-note-to-one-syllable style is the overriding feature in these compositions. In *The Seven Joys of Mary* and *Sleep Holy Babe*, there are two main influences that are almost immediately evident, with the former showing elements of the writing of Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the latter traces of the carols of Peter Warlock. The modal and folk-like quality of the recurring theme within the strophic construction of *The Seven Joys of Mary*, gives a strong indication, along with the chordal harmony, of Vaughan Williams's folk-influenced works (Ex. 2.34).

Ex. 2.34: *The Seven Joys of Mary* (1948) – bars 1 to 16

THE SEVEN JOYS OF MARY. Howard Taghwa  
(Dec 1948)

Moderato. II

Soprano Solo

*pp* The first good joy the Mary had, it was the joy of one; To see the blessed Jesus Christ, who he was her dear son; when he was born here in Bethlehem, and happily may we be his praise.

*Full.*

*And.*

*f* For the sake of the Holy Ghost, to all the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

*And.*

*f* For the sake of the Holy Ghost, to all the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

The richer and perhaps more harmonically interesting *Sleep Holy Babe* is more reminiscent of the Warlock carols that Leighton had sung as a chorister as mentioned in the first chapter. The melodic interest is on the top line almost throughout, with some imitative



entries, and, although not to the same extent, there is an element of unpredictable and at times extravagant harmony as at the conclusion of *Lully, lulla*. Techniques present in both Leighton's piano music and songs are also found in both *The Seven Joys of Mary* as well as in *The Twelve Days of Christmas* (which was written alongside the *Three Carols* in December 1948), where the recurring themes are found in different voice parts and with varying textures, providing a straightforward way to expand and stretch small musical ideas.

Completed towards the end of the academic year of 1948 to 1949, the *Missa Brevis* and the *Pater Noster* show very little progress in Leighton's style, being mostly chordal, with the melodic interest at the top of the choral texture, and only occasional hints of counterpoint. The choral parts each present a coherent line, however, displaying an innate understanding of the importance of this within the medium. Much of the variation found within these two works consists of a wide dynamic range, coupled with occasional uses of irregular time signatures to retain the natural qualities found within speech rhythms. Both works, as a whole, suffer somewhat from a constant delivery of text in trying to keep a speech quality, which is not so imaginative; in the *Credo* of the *Missa Brevis* Leighton goes as far as to request it be sung '*quasi parlante*' at the top of the movement.

The *Kyrie* is marked as being in the Dorian mode on the score, which demonstrates the influence of modal writing that once again came from influences such as Vaughan Williams. This was not a trait to be found later when Leighton took the view that plainsong and folk music could not be considered as progressive within his own music and composition in general.

The mass shows an awareness of the liturgy and the various elements found within it; there are also obvious comparisons to be made between the *Missa Brevis* and other works, most specifically mass settings by John Ireland and Harold Darke. The pattern of solo and full choir in the *Agnus Dei* follows exactly that set by Ireland in his *Communion Service in C* – the first and second times the phrase ‘O Lamb of God’ is used it is sung by a bass solo, and responded to by the full choir at ‘Have mercy upon us’ (Ex. 2.35). Also, as in Ireland’s setting, the third and final time that the text ‘O Lamb of God’ occurs, it is sung by a treble voice and is once again followed by the full choir in imitative entries at ‘grant us peace’.

Ex. 2.35: *Missa Brevis* (1949): *Agnus Dei* – bars 1 to 3

The musical score is for the first two entries of the 'O Lamb of God' text in the *Agnus Dei* of the *Missa Brevis*. It is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Lento.' and the dynamics are 'p' (piano). The lyrics are: 'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world: Have mercy upon us.' The score shows the first two entries of the 'O Lamb of God' text, with the first entry by a bass solo and the second by the full choir. The piano accompaniment features a 'liberamente' section.

The *Gloria* is the only movement to make use of a technique where each voice part enters with a different part of the text – this is a tried and tested method of getting through the

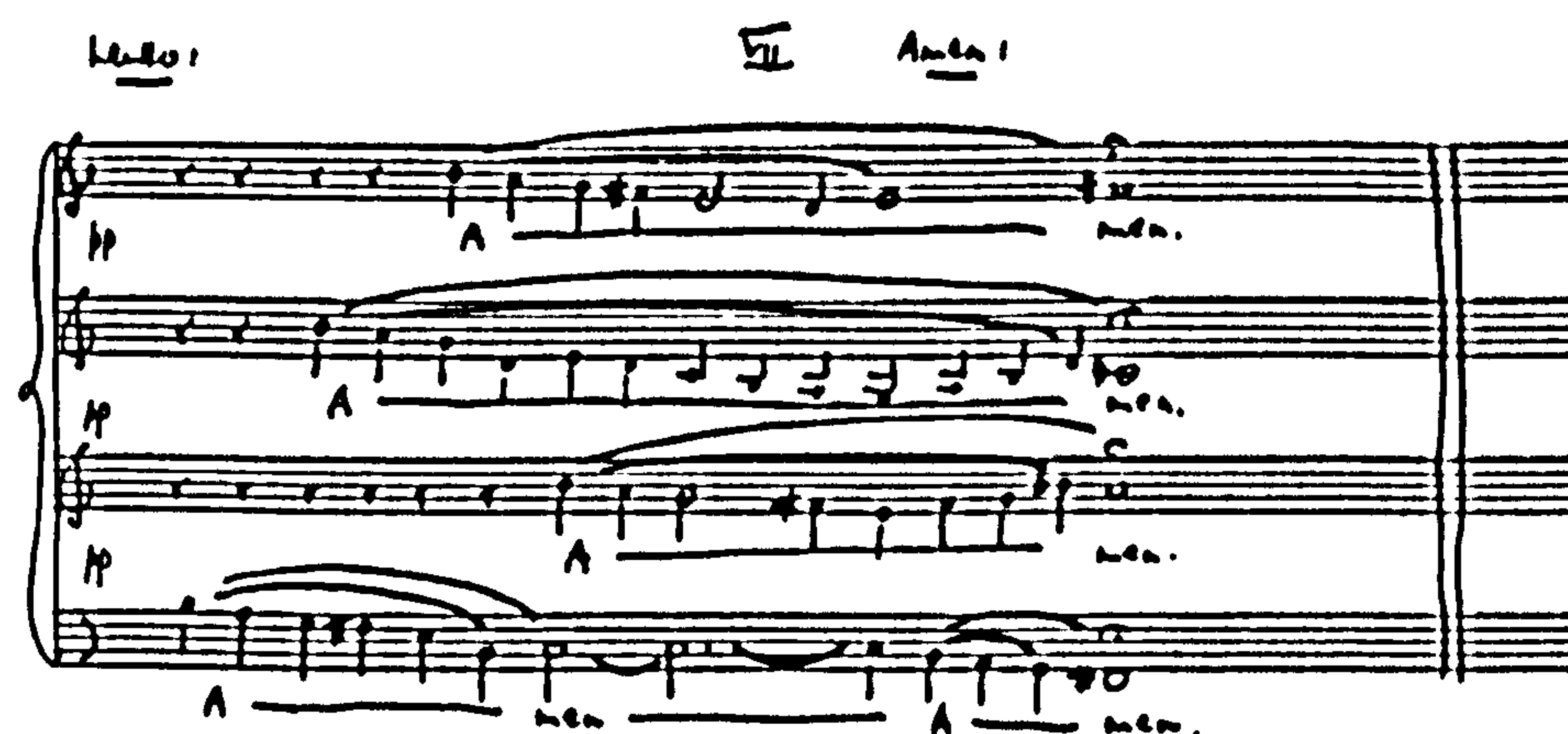


substantial text swiftly, and was used frequently in Viennese Mass settings by Joseph Haydn and in earlier Renaissance settings of the Mass. The use of a soprano soloist at 'Thou that takest away the sins of the world' is reminiscent of the *Communion Service in F* by Harold Darke, who also employs a soloist in a similar manner at the same point in the text, although Darke uses a bass. The appearance of the soloist, above a held chord hummed with half-closed lips by the choir, also helps to break up the monotony of almost continuous unaccompanied chordal writing. The short final *Amen* is drawn directly from musical material used at 'grant us peace' at the end of the *Agnus Dei* (Ex. 2.36i & ii).

Ex. 2.36i: *Missa Brevis* (1949): *Agnus Dei* – bars 5 to 7

Handwritten musical score for Ex. 2.36i, *Missa Brevis* (1949): *Agnus Dei* – bars 5 to 7. The score is written on four staves. The first staff is a soprano line with lyrics 'thou that takest away the sins of the world'. The second staff is a mezzo-soprano line with lyrics 'Grant'. The third staff is an alto line with lyrics 'Grant us thy'. The fourth staff is a bass line with lyrics 'Grant us thy peace'. The tempo is marked 'Lento Molto'. The score shows a melodic line for the soloist and a hummed chord for the choir.

Ex. 2.36ii: *Missa Brevis* (1949): *Amen*



This particular style of writing doesn't display any specific advancement in musical style, once again relying heavily on the direct influence of other English composers. While there is no unifying material found throughout the entire work, it is unified by its particular homophonic nature, with the uppermost voice part containing most of the melodic interest. The Mass was probably an exercise in informed writing for voices, including extremely approachable vocal lines. The simplistic style of writing found here works better in a more restricted text framework, and is used to good effect in the *Pater Noster*. Written at about the same time as the *Missa Brevis*, the *Pater Noster* is musically of a similar vein and also uses the English version from The Book of Common Prayer. The words 'Our Father' are intoned by a bass soloist, and the remaining 28 bars are almost entirely homophonic. It is possible that the *Pater Noster* was written as a later addition to the *Missa Brevis*, as the Lord's Prayer is a part of the Eucharist liturgy, although it stands separately from the Mass setting.



## Instrumental Music

Leighton's output of both chamber and instrumental music is not the largest body of any particular genre from this time, but is nevertheless extremely significant in a number of ways. Most of the nine works in the various chamber and instrumental arrangements fall into the first two years of Leighton's undergraduate years, with only one work in the third academic year and no compositions in the final year that fall under this category. This group is represented by three published works, one of which was published in part (*Elegy for Cello and Piano* Opus 5 from the *Sonata for Cello and Piano*) and one which was published much later in a revised version from 1953 (*Serenade in C for Flute and Piano*, published as Opus 19a).

Those works that are most worthy of note from this genre are typically those that contain the piano, with two works for violin (*Sonata quasi fantasia*, Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano) and those scored for flute and cello already mentioned. There are inevitably links between these works and the piano music and songs from the same period, unifying Leighton's student works and developing techniques. The features shared with other genres containing the piano include: an abundant use of sequences; a rapidly and frequently changing key, coupled with an ambiguous tonic key and parallel harmony (Ex. 2.37); occasional use of bitonality, along with a restrained dissonance (Ex. 2.38); varied textures around the repetition of a theme; alteration of themes themselves, both melodically and rhythmically (Ex. 2.39i & ii); tentative sections of counterpoint and imitative writing (Ex. 2.40); and traditional forms within the movements.

Ex. 2.37: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 1, bars 1 to 9

**Allegro molto appassionato** (*♩ = circa 116*)

**VIOLIN**

**PIANO**

Ex. 2.38: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 1, bars 20 to 24

Ex. 2.39i: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 1 to 5

**Presto energico sempre ritmico**



Ex. 2.39ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 29 to 36

The musical score for Ex. 2.39ii consists of two systems. The first system features a violin part with a 'dolce ma marcato' marking and a piano (p) dynamic, and a piano part with a pianissimo (pp) dynamic. The second system continues the piano part with a 'sempre simile' marking.

Ex. 2.40: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 1, bars 133 to 143

The musical score for Ex. 2.40 consists of two systems. The first system features a violin part with a 'p subito ma sempre agitato' marking and a piano (p) dynamic, and a piano part with a 'p subito' marking. The second system continues the piano part with a 'sempre simile' marking.

The earliest of these works, the *Sonata Quasi Fantasia*, scored for violin and piano, is overtly Romantic and exuberant in style. The Romantic nature of the subsequent *Sonata No.1 for*

*Violin and Piano* Opus 4 is also clear, supported by this programme note from the first performance in the Grande Théâtre in Bordeaux in 1949:

The full, passionate melody of the violin soon turns into a gentler motif providing a happier contrast. But this one in turn [...] finds an intensity as powerful as that of the first theme. The slow movement is made up of a very free development of a rather simple motif, with a prologue and an epilogue characterised by the alternate intervention of the two instruments. The last movement has renewed passion. It has three motifs, the first quick, the other slow and the third one rather fragmented first played by the [piano] and then taken by the [violin]. The sonata ends with a distant evocation of these different motifs.<sup>63</sup>

The piano part of the *Sonata Quasi Fantasia* is similar to that of the Opus 1 sonatinas, but the standard of writing could neatly be placed between the sonatinas and the *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* in terms of progression. There is a greater range of textures used in the later *Sonata Quasi Fantasia*, with generally busier piano writing, providing a precursor to the *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*. Many more contrasts are to be found in Leighton's music as time goes on; most noticeably in *Sonata Quasi Fantasia*, where closely spaced last inversion seventh chords are juxtaposed with widely spread chords (Ex. 2.41).

Ex. 2.41: *Sonata quasi fantasia* (1948) – bars 200 to 210



<sup>63</sup> Anon., programme note (possibly by Leighton) from the first performance of the *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* in the Grand Théâtre, Bordeaux, 1949 – translated from the original French.



The transformation of themes using differing textures and transposition is found in all the instrumental and chamber works from this period, demonstrating how vital this was to Leighton as a developing composer, especially when combined with elements of chromatic movement (Ex. 2.42).

Ex. 2.42: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 169 to 179



There is evidence that he was growing in confidence in transposing themes, with smaller intervals of transposition involved, often to unrelated keys; for example, the first ten bars of the slow second movement from the first violin sonata are resourcefully repeated almost exactly the same, but a semitone higher in bars 11 to 19.

As opposed to vocal accompaniment writing, there are many more opportunities for interaction between the piano and solo part in his instrumental works, with less immediate need to be sensitive to a singer and the text. In general, there is an almost relentless nature to the writing for the solo parts, with almost continuous writing characterising these early

instrumental works. The piano is able to take on a larger role; indeed, at the opening of the first movement of the *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano*, the piano states its own independent theme beneath the continuous flute part, almost as a countermelody within the texture (Ex. 2.43), and subsequently even introduces the second subject of the exposition in the same movement, before the flute statement of the new theme.

Ex. 2.43: *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* Opus 19a, movement 1, bars 1 to 6

Allegro con moto - scorrevole

The musical score for Ex. 2.43 consists of two systems. The first system shows the Flute and Piano parts for the first six bars. The Flute part is in the upper staff, and the Piano part is in the lower staff. The tempo is 'Allegro con moto - scorrevole'. The piano part begins with a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic and a 'con Ped.' (con pedale) marking. The flute part is marked 'molto cantabile' and 'p' (piano). The piano part features a continuous, flowing melody with a 'p cantabile' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Counterpoint is also a more readily available technique when not accompanying a solo voice, the instrument providing a more versatile extra line, of which Leighton makes frequent use; there are ample moments of basic counterpoint and imitative writing, with more evidence that Leighton is beginning to think fugally. Towards the end of the *Sonata Quasi Fantasia*, a section of imitative writing evolves into a stretto-like section; although not preceded by a fugal section, this series of close entries shows a definite development in his ability to incorporate this technique into his compositions (Ex. 2.44).



Ex. 2.44: *Sonata quasi fantasia* (1948) – bars 256 to 261



There is ample evidence of musical economy in these instrumental works; an ostinato accompaniment is an almost expected feature at the opening of movements as well as at the introduction of new themes in each of these compositions, found as both a broken-chord figure, and in the case of the *Elegy for 'Cello and Piano*, a syncopated slowly repeated chord (Ex. 2.45).

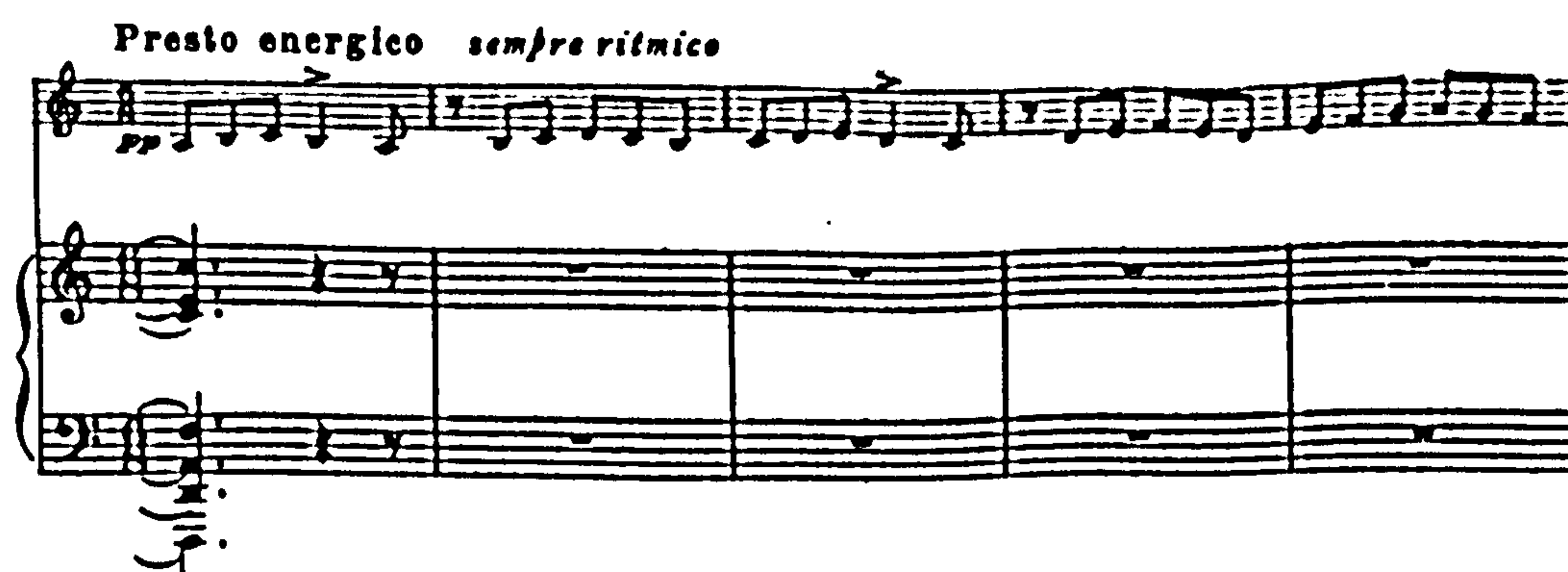
Ex. 2.45: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 29 to 36

This common feature of Leighton's early music is more subtle in the second movement of the first violin sonata; the introduction of a prologue at the opening prevents each

movement of the sonata beginning with an ostinato, as had become almost predictable in other works. This greater lucidity in Leighton's writing is echoed by the improved overall structural strength, which is mostly provided by interludes combining fragments of various themes already heard, and of those to come. Also, with fewer identifiable breaks between the sections of a movement, the whole is becoming more unified. The increased unity between sections is also to be seen in the work as a whole, with cyclical elements found in both melody and accompaniment. This becomes most apparent near the end of the agitated third movement of the first violin sonata, which quotes the opening section of the slow second movement, instilling calm to an agitated section.

The unity within and between movements goes one step further, with unity between works themselves, both in the general style of writing as well as with some of the material being shared, which shall be discussed further in the next chapter. The final movement of the first violin sonata is a typical example of a shared style and outlook, strongly reminiscent of the final movement of the first sonatina for piano – a direct comparison reveals how closely they are related (Ex. 2.46i & ii).

Ex. 2.46i: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 1 to 5





Ex. 2.46ii: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 3, bars 1 to 6

The way the third and calmer theme is introduced in the final movement of the *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*, with a ostinato figure in the left hand accompanying a lyrical melody in the right, bears a distinct resemblance to both the slow movement of the *Sonatina for Piano No. 1* Opus 1a and the central trio section of the second movement of the *Sonata for Piano No. 1* Opus 2, where the piano introduces the theme between bars 64 and 79 (Ex. 2.47i, ii & iii).

Ex. 2.47i: *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano* Opus 4 – movement 3, bars 29 to 36

Ex. 2.47ii: *Sonata No. 1 for Piano* Opus 2 – movement 2, bars 119 to 130

Andante con moto e tranquillo

The musical score for Ex. 2.47ii shows a piano accompaniment in 3/4 time. The right hand plays a melodic line with a long note followed by a quarter note, while the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The tempo is 'Andante con moto e tranquillo'. The score includes markings for 'sempre simile' and 'p' (piano).

Ex. 2.47iii: *Sonatina No. 1* Opus 1a – movement 2, bars 1 to 10

Andante espressivo      cantabile

Piano

pp

pp

The musical score for Ex. 2.47iii shows a piano accompaniment in 3/4 time. The right hand plays a melodic line with a long note followed by a quarter note, while the left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The tempo is 'Andante espressivo' and 'cantabile'. The score includes markings for 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'p' (piano).

Despite the obvious use of traditional forms and structures within many of Leighton's earlier works, there are signs that he was beginning to break away slightly from these restrictions; for instance the *Sonata Quasi Fantasia*, being in one movement, does not strictly conform to any traditional structure, while the *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* has an overall three-movement structure which concludes with a slow movement – in between these two works however, the first violin sonata is in a balanced fast-slow-fast, three-movement arrangement.



As well as an abundance of shared characteristics, there are various features and techniques found only in the instrumental works from this time. An increasingly important aspect of musical tension is beginning to become evident within Leighton's music, whether obvious or underlying. Conflict and resolution – which goes hand in hand with dissonance, chromatic movement, a constantly changing key signature, an uncertainty as to the location of the tonic key and increasingly dense and intense harmony – is becoming a significant factor that was only to increase and intensify throughout the rest of Leighton's output. The movements, while retaining traditional forms, become centred on a series of climaxes and resolutions, most apparent in the works for instrument and piano. It is interesting to note that in revising the *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano*, Leighton went as far as to cut a substantial section of the original music from the end of the *Romanza* and replaced it with a further climax. The expressive and lyrical character of Leighton's writing – which in the *Serenade* also becomes improvisatory and rhapsodic in nature – is more intense in the instrumental works with larger ranges and more nuances available in the various instruments used than in the human voice, now beginning to support a more passionate and profound style of composition.

Further revisions incorporated into the *Serenade* during 1953, apart from the modifications in the first movement and the addition of the final *Pastorale* movement, actually serve to make the work more Romantic in outlook – pairs of quavers are often made more lyrical with a modification into triplet quavers alongside the addition of more ornamentation. The added final movement is particularly congruous with the other movements, being of the

more pastoral style of Leighton's student works rather than incorporating the general progressions that Leighton had gone through by 1953. There is no evidence however that there were any modifications made to the *Elegy for Cello and Piano*, when it was extracted from the three movement sonata, and the overall effect of the *Elegy* is, consequentially, of the potential of a significantly larger work. The arch form found in the *Elegy* is also a slight move away from the traditional forms, being more akin to the music of Herbert Howells, who frequently used this structure; the arch form is also an aid to the vital sense of tension within Leighton's music. In a similar fashion to the slow movement of the *Violin Sonata* Opus 4, the *Elegy* Opus 5 presents a passionate development of a theme, the interest being kept with a variety of keys and rhythmic and interval variations. Typical chords that creep into much of Leighton's music are present in this relatively short work with an abundant use of added sixths, sevenths and ninths – varied spacing with constant maintenance of the musical line contributes to the quality of the construction of both Leighton's early and later works.

\* \* \*

In 1951 Leighton left Oxford, with many achievements already under his belt. With a growing list of publications, the Mendelssohn Scholarship, two degrees (B.A. in Classics and B.Mus.) and the support of such influential figures as Bernard Rose and Gerald Finzi, the path of his career from this point was now firmly decided in favour of music and in particular as a composer. A newspaper cutting from around this time reported of Leighton's success so far:



A 21-year old, Mr. Kenneth Leighton, son of Mr. and Mrs. T. Leighton, Denstone Street, Wakefield, who is studying music at Oxford University, has been awarded the Mendelssohn Scholarship, valued at £300 and granted annually to a composer under 35 for new and unpublished works.

The scholarship, founded shortly after Mendelssohn's death 103 years ago, is intended to enable the holder to pursue his musical studies abroad. Mr. Leighton hopes to spend six months next year studying music in Italy.

[...] He received his B.A. degree last year and is sitting for his Bachelor of Music final examination next week. Mr Leighton was elected a Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music at 16, at which age he composed one of his earliest piano works – his 1<sup>st</sup> Sonatina – which has been broadcast by the B.B.C.

[...] An accomplished pianist, Mr. Leighton has given a number of recitals, including one in Wakefield Cathedral, where he was a choirboy and is at present a server. He is president of the Eggleston [sic] Music Society of Oxford.<sup>64</sup>

In considering Leighton's early works up to this point it is clear just how many of them (not counting the considerable number of songs) rely on a fairly specific formula. Naturally, a progression can be seen, with patterns emerging, but the dominance of sonata form within the structure of many of his works is evident. Many of Leighton's works revolve around an exposition (usually of two subjects, sometimes related), a development section, a recapitulation and usually a coda. That is not to say that Leighton's writing was restrictive – it displays a certain strength in the gestation of these works and a strong consideration for the final outcome and the flow and direction of the music. Leighton's next destination was to be Rome and the tutelage of Goffredo Petrassi, where the formulation of his musical style was to make considerable leaps forward in just a short time, with wider and opportunities and influences now available to the young composer.

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<sup>64</sup> Anon., *Wakefield student gains famous music award*, (publication and date unknown) – from Kenneth Leighton's own collection of cuttings.

## Chapter Three

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### Rome, Wakefield and Deal, 1951-1953

The award of the Mendelssohn Scholarship allowed Leighton to study in Rome and in particular as a pupil of Goffredo Petrassi,<sup>1</sup> following his time as a student in Oxford. It was to prove one of the most formative experiences in his rapid development as a composer, and the harmonic and rhythmic development that his music experienced during this period was to contribute a good deal to the more instantly recognisable, individual and established style of his later works. Music and composition were now his main concerns and the rapid development that ensued was a testament to his focused attentions as well as the various new influences that now surrounded him.

Only a few details of Leighton's time in Rome are known about, and he never wrote a great deal about his time there. He first travelled to Rome in March of 1951, following the conclusion of his B.Mus. degree, with which he graduated in the summer of that year. Leighton's youngest child, Robert, has written of his time there based on reminiscences of his mother, and Leighton's first wife, Lydia Vignapiano:

[...he] eventually settled in a guest house called Casa Chiellini on Via Liguria. It was there that he met Lydia, who used to go the Chiellini restaurant for lunch, since it was near her office. They became acquainted when he asked her to help him hire a piano for his lodgings, and started going to concerts together, mainly recitals or orchestral works, sometimes at the Teatro Argentina and, during the summer evenings, outdoors at the Basilica of Massenzio. Lydia remembers K[enneth] being slightly shy and not socialising a great deal except with her and one or two friends who came out to visit from England. He was often working,

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<sup>1</sup> Goffredo Petrassi (1904-2003) was a distinguished Italian composer who employed serial techniques in much of his music. He was an influential teacher – among those who studied with Petrassi in Rome were Peter Maxwell Davies, Gordon Crosse and Cornelius Cardew.



playing the piano or composing at Casa Chiellini or else out and about in the city. Having a keen interest in antiquity he spent some of his spare time visiting museums and archaeological sites in Rome and the environs.

Only one musical work heard by Leighton during his stay is known about: Josephine Leighton has recalled a tale of the young Leighton, who, in a bid to impress Lydia, took her and her sister to the opera. They were expecting to be entertained with an evening at a typical Italian grand opera and were both suitably dressed for the occasion only to be disappointed to discover that he was taking them to see a production of Arnold Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*.<sup>2</sup>

There are few details of his study with Petrassi, and Leighton never wrote about them in any detail. Some valuable further details have once again been provided by Robert Leighton on this subject

K[enneth]'s scholarship funds (he was on a tight budget in Rome) paid for him to have private lessons with Petrassi. The arrangement was fairly informal: he would go round to Petrassi's house on a roughly weekly basis (Lydia is not sure exactly how often or how many lessons he had overall), but he was not formally attached to any institution in Rome such as Santa Cecilia (contrary to C[arolyn] Smith's book where it says that he was at the Conservatorio).<sup>3</sup>

Some possible extra insight could be gained from the reminiscences of Peter Maxwell Davies (contained in Paul Griffiths' biography), who also studied in Rome under Petrassi from late in 1957 to 1959:

Petrassi was very clever. He took a great deal of trouble looking at my scores and my sketches, and he'd ask questions. The lesson consisted basically of questions,

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<sup>2</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.

<sup>3</sup> Leighton, Robert, correspondence with Adam Binks, (15 May 2006).

and I had to answer sensibly and carefully. If there was something wrong with my answer he would really interrogate me.<sup>4</sup>

Mike Seabrook's biography of Maxwell Davies contains some further details of his time in

Rome:

The relationship between Petrassi and his pupil, the way in which the one taught the other, was fundamentally very simple: Max would compose music, Petrassi would ask him questions about it, and this went on for the whole of Max's eighteen-month stay in Rome [...] Petrassi's questions were particularly difficult and pertinacious, and they kept Max on his composing much better than any formalized system of examination and exegesis would have done [...] Max had to justify everything he did; if he could not, or if his explanations were lame, he was subjected to an intensive examination, which ultimately stripped the work he had done to the bare bone. Flaws in technique and conception were mercilessly exposed, and he was enabled to take several paces back and assess his work objectively.<sup>5</sup>

It must be noted that Leighton did work substantially quicker than Maxwell Davies: during his eighteen months in Rome, Maxwell Davies spent most of this time on only two works, *St Michael* and *Prolation*.<sup>6</sup> Christopher Finzi also recalls the following about Leighton's *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12:

I also remember going to the (I think) first performance of the *Violin Concerto* at the Albert Hall (it may well have been a Prom) with Frederick Grinke. Dad [Gerald Finzi] & I met Kenneth afterwards, by the organ console. He was studying with Petrassi at the time, who, Kenneth said, told him he must take longer over writing a piece, and that as consequence he had taken 3 whole weeks to write this concerto.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Leighton goes on to say how, similar to Maxwell Davies, Petrassi was not Leighton's first choice of teacher for study abroad – Maxwell Davies had initially wanted to study with Olivier Messiaen in Paris, but he would have had to become part of a relatively large class,

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<sup>4</sup> Griffiths, Paul, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, (London: Robson Books, 1982), 104-5.

<sup>5</sup> Seabrook Mike, *Max: The Life and Music of Peter Maxwell Davies*, (London: Victor Gollancz), 46-47.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>7</sup> Finzi, Christopher, correspondence with Adam Binks, (20 May 2006).



whereas Petrassi could offer one-on-one tuition.<sup>8</sup> A little-known fact is that Leighton had originally wanted to study with Luigi Dallapiccola in Florence, but he was unable to accommodate him.<sup>9</sup>

Leighton did not keep a diary throughout his life, and much of his early correspondence is no longer extant, though his compositional output from this time provides much to consider.

**Table 3.1:** Compositions from May 1951 to August 1952

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
March – May 1951	<i>Just now the lilac is in bloom</i>	Bar, str	10
April – June 1951	<i>Overture: Primavera Romana</i>	full orch.	14
May – July 1951	<i>Quartet</i>	2 vln, vla, vc	-
April – Sept. 1951	<i>Concerto for Piano No. 1</i>	pf, full orch.	11
April – Sept. 1951	<i>You're so far away</i>	voice, pf	-
Sept. 1951 – Jan. 1952	<i>Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Piano and Orchestra</i>	pf, full orch.	-
Feb. – April 1952	<i>Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra</i>	vln, small orch.	12
May – June 1952	<i>Concerto for Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings</i>	vla, hp, timp, str	15
June – July 1952	<i>Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Orchestra</i>	full orch.	-
Aug. 1952	<i>São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira for Two Pianos</i>	2 pf	-

The above table details Leighton's composing activities from leaving Oxford until taking up his appointment as Professor of Harmony at the Royal Marines School of Music at Deal in Kent.<sup>10</sup> The increase in the number of orchestral works, and particularly concertos, now being composed by Leighton is evident. The gradually more adventurous scope of his writing that had taken place at Oxford takes a considerable step forward now, with the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 45; also in Griffiths, Paul, *Peter Maxwell Davies*, (London: Robson Books, 1982), 104.

<sup>9</sup> Leighton, Robert, correspondence with Adam Binks, (15 May 2006).

<sup>10</sup> The school is no longer at Deal, and is now resident at the naval base in Portsmouth.



abandonment of song writing (apart from one final song written during the time of composing the first piano concerto, *You're so far away*) and a reduced amount of chamber and instrumental music. Almost all of the works during the year are on a larger scale, including those not for orchestra – Leighton was clearly not as concerned with writing miniatures at this stage of his development.

There was an instant change in the type of work that Leighton was writing at this point. The first work of this period, which may have been begun in Oxford, *Just now the lilac is in bloom* Opus 10, stylistically belongs to his time as student, although it was completed in Rome, the manuscript is signed off with the word 'Roma'. The three remaining works of 1951 show a marked step up in his activities as a composer. Directly following *Just now the lilac is in bloom* is the *Quartet for Strings (Rome)* composed between May and July of 1951. The two remaining works of the year are *Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 (composed between April and September, 1951) and *Primavera Romana* Opus 14 (a concert overture composed between April and June, 1951). The scope, construction and size of these latest works written in the very different surroundings of Rome are noticeably more advanced and mature - the piano concerto and *Primavera Romana* are the only published works of the four mentioned in this paragraph.

The overture *Primavera Romana* Opus 14 for full orchestra was Leighton's next considerable success following the *Veris Gratia Suite* and the award of the Mendelssohn Scholarship, being premiered by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Leopold Stokowski at the Liverpool Festival on 4 August 1951. Leighton's second wife,



Josephine Leighton has intimated that the work was recommended by Bernard Rose, who had been asked by Stokowski to recommend some young and promising composers.<sup>11</sup> *Primavera Romana* was supposed to be programmed alongside Schoenberg's *Kammersinfonie* as well as Bach, Wagner and Tchaikovsky, but the Schoenberg was removed from the programme at the last minute. Reviews of this concert were favourable, and maximum exposure was guaranteed. The Liverpool Daily Post reported on 6 August:

The [...] overture of Kenneth Leighton [...] was the only new thing in the programme, a work playing only a few minutes, which was disappointing as it showed distinct qualities. It may be that conciseness and an absence of vain reputation are this composer's virtues. It is exuberantly scored.<sup>12</sup>

The Daily Telegraph briefly mentioned 'a happy, festive little piece based on three rhythmic subjects',<sup>13</sup> and the Manchester Guardian reviewer described 'brisk and adroitly written music which has no great depth but is engaging in its verve and glitter.'<sup>14</sup>

Following his return from Rome, Leighton was to retain fairly regular contact with Petrassi, and he kept him well informed as to his activities and progress. There are a small number of letters from Petrassi still in existence, all in Italian, and the following is a rough translation from the earliest of these that Leighton received, in October 1951:

Dear Leighton,

I am delighted to hear of the good result of your Overture conducted by Stokowski. I wish even greater success for the Symphony for Strings. If it is ever published send me a copy.

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<sup>11</sup> In conversation with Mrs. Josephine Leighton.

<sup>12</sup> A.K.H., *Stokowski Again*, (Liverpool Daily Post, 6 August 1951).

<sup>13</sup> G.C.H.R., *Stokowski in two moods: Bach, Tchaikovsky*, (The Daily Telegraph, 6 August 1951).

<sup>14</sup> J. H. E., Review of the premiere of *Primavera Romana*, (Manchester Guardian, date unknown).

I too have been happy to know you and your musical intelligence. Work [hard] and be very serious with yourself – you can do a lot and do it well [...]

Greetings etc.

Goffredo Petrassi<sup>15</sup>

Completed in Rome and written between April and June of 1951, *Primavera Romana* (along with a number of other works from around this time) is dedicated to Lydia. It is for a standard full orchestra, and is celebratory in nature, comparatively brief (at only five minutes in length) and boisterously rhythmic. In accordance with a large number of Leighton's works as a student, the theme is once again of spring. While it was started at the same time as the first piano concerto and is listed after the piano concerto in the composition books, it was fully completed and premiered long before the concerto was finished and should perhaps be considered before the concerto among Leighton's compositional activities in Rome.

*Primavera Romana* was published by the regular publisher of his early works, Alfred Lengnick. Shortly after this, however, Leighton was to begin to have his compositions published by Novello, who were certainly the largest publishers of music in Britain at the time, and he was eventually to be taken on as a resident composer. By the time of Leighton's death, Novello was to have the majority of his works in print in their catalogue, publishing all but a few pieces. Over the following years, however, and while published by Novello, Leighton was to be commissioned and published by a number of other companies, including Oxford University Press, Hinshaw Music and Roberton, with three works being

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<sup>15</sup> Petrassi, Goffredo, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton (trans. Caroline Higgett), (17 October 1951).



published posthumously by Maccenas music (*Serenade in C for Flute and Piano, Concerto for Oboe and Strings, and Improvisations: De Profundis for Harpsichord*).

Although the *Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano* Opus 11 was completed in September 1951 it underwent revisions in 1959 before being published by Novello. The original score is now lost and so the extent and detail of the revisions that it was subject to cannot be determined. It is one of the few post-student works to be labelled with a particular key by Leighton in the title – only two more of Leighton's works written after this were entitled with a specific key, the *Communion Service in D* Opus 45 (1965) and the *Dance Suite in D* Opus 53 (1967 to 1968) – there is no obvious link as to why each of these works was labelled in the key of D major or minor. It is difficult to know whether or not to place it in his period of study at Rome or later, from around the time of the revisions. The germination and bulk of the composition was obviously from his time in Rome, and it is possible that the revisions and rescoring were not particularly extensive, as it received a performance just before it was revised in a radio broadcast on 7 March 1958 – Peter Wallfisch played the solo part and Leighton conducted the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. The concerto must have been considered in some state of completion by Leighton at that point. It is possible that it was just a case of perfecting and adding the polish of a more mature composer to a work considered close to a finishing point.

The first concert performance of the revised and rescored version took place in London in September 1961, played once again by Peter Wallfisch – by this point Leighton was a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. Leighton played the concerto himself to open the

1961 concert season of the Leeds Symphony Society in the Great Hall of the University of Leeds. *The Yorkshire Post* reported of this performance:

The highlight of the programme was the revised version of Kenneth Leighton's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the composer at the keyboard. This Yorkshire musician formerly at this university and now at Edinburgh University, gave a dazzling account of his solo lines; and the orchestra too, revelled, particularly in the strongly rhythmic opening movement. The whole concerto was fascinating, and it is a tribute to the players and their conductor W. Iles-Pulford, that they gave such a creditable performance.<sup>16</sup>

A subsequent performance (with the same revisions and rescoring) took place in the Reid School of Music of Edinburgh University on 2 November 1961 with Leighton as soloist once again, although this time with the Reid Orchestra conducted by Sidney Newman, who was Reid Professor at the time.<sup>17</sup> It was programmed in between two works by Brahms, the *Academic Festival Overture* and his *Symphony No. 2*. The concerto was warmly received, *The Scotsman* reporting of the concert:

'The orchestra's taut exuberance was again in evidence in the accompaniment to Kenneth Leighton's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, an immensely enjoyable work, full of rich colouring and virtuoso excitement, which one would like to see championed in the larger concerts given throughout the country by the Scottish National Orchestra.

'Peter Wallfisch, who has played the concerto on several occasions in the past, was the brilliant soloist, dashing off the vivid outer movements with staggering panache, and investing the affecting slow movement with a quiet nobility.'<sup>18</sup>

Leighton returned to England in October 1951. He was assessed and made exempt from National Service in the same month, due to health issues. Leighton returned to live in Wakefield with his mother and father once more, and for a time was not particularly happy. Robert Leighton writes that: 'He was a bit down by then mainly because he was missing

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<sup>16</sup> Gardner, J. E., *Concert by Leeds Symphony Society*, (Yorkshire Post, 28 October 1961).

<sup>17</sup> The programme from this concert details the performance in the Reid Concert Hall, Edinburgh, (2 November 1961).

<sup>18</sup> N.G., *Lively and alert: University concert*, (The Scotsman, 3 November 1961).



Lydia and Rome, and hadn't yet found a steady job, although that eventually materialized with the marines at Deal.<sup>19</sup> Money was even tighter than when in Rome, and Josephine Leighton relates that:

[...] he was even harder up when he returned from Rome, to the extent that he was forced to sell a lot of his books, something that upset him very much indeed. He was back at home living with his parents until the Deal job turned up.<sup>20</sup>

The subsequent major works that Leighton wrote continued to be for orchestra and solo instruments, the first of these being *Napoli – Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra* begun around the same time as the piano concerto in Rome and completed and completed in January 1952 in Wakefield. This work was followed by the *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (composed between February and April of 1952) and the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings* Opus 15 (composed between May and June of 1952). Yet again the opus numbers of Leighton's works are not applied to works in chronological order, with numbers 13 and 14 being composed at different times – 14 is *Primavera Romana* and Opus 13 was initially allocated to a pair of anthems written between 1956 and 1957 (*God's Grandeur* and *Nativitie*) but later not allocated to any work. There is no known explanation for this inconsistency in the allocation and the various changes of mind in the opus numbers.

The violin concerto is dedicated to the violinist Frederick Grinke who gave the first performance on the BBC Third Programme in May 1953 with the St Cecilia Orchestra under Trevor Harvey. An encouraging review read as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> Leighton, Robert, correspondence with Adam Binks, (15 May 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Leighton, Josephine, correspondence with Adam Binks, (20 May 2006).

Turning from the antique to the contemporary, I fell compelled to cry, like Schumann on a famous occasion, 'Hats off, gentlemen!' to Kenneth Leighton, whose Violin Concerto was played by Frederick Grinke with the St Cecilia Orchestra under Trevor Harvey's direction. Here is evidently a composer to watch. Like Dallapiccola, he disproves the proposition that the twelve-note system can produce only crabbed music or at best is applicable only to decadent and morbid subjects. Perhaps that proposition should have been confined to the German originators of the system. Anyhow, Leighton's Concerto seemed to me a beautiful composition, in which the slow movement at the end provided the true and inevitable climax, so that there was no suggestion that the normal order had been altered for the mere sake of doing something different.<sup>21</sup>

Grinke subsequently performed the concerto at the Henry Wood Proms a year later on 31 August 1954 at the Royal Albert Hall with Malcolm Sargent conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra – a sign of the early recognition and attention that Leighton was beginning to attract. The review from the following day in *The Times* reads:

After a first half devoted to Wagner, last night's Promenade concert did its duty to the contemporary cause by bringing forward, for the first time on the London concert platform, a recent violin concerto by a promising young English composer, Kenneth Leighton, who is 25.

The main emotional weight of the work comes in the slow Finale, a yearning, introspective movement of great expressive beauty. It is counterbalanced by a purposeful opening Allegro with themes of strongly marked character, but the intervening Intermezzo and Scherzo are less successful in establishing definite moods.

The violin writing lifts the soloist to true concerto status, yet wastes no time in mere rhetorical display. The orchestration is rather less assured.

There was a confident soloist in Mr. Frederick Grinke (who proved himself a master of the arts of keeping going with a broken string), but the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent did not put quite enough into the music – enough verve in the Scherzo or emotional intensity in the Finale.<sup>22</sup>

The programme note to the concerto from the performance at the Proms gives a concise insight into this work and the circumstances surrounding its composition:

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<sup>21</sup> Hussey, Dyneley, Review article, (*The Listener*, 14 May 1953), 817.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., *Promenade Concert: New Violin Concerto*, (*The Times*, 1 October 1954).



It was written in Italy, under strong emotional compulsion, in the space of three weeks, and is prefixed by some verses of Ada Negri, which can be roughly translated 'Today I seek you, and do not find you; you are neither in me or near me, nor do I know what fault I had committed that you have punished me in the light of your presence'. While reflecting the spirit of the whole work (whose themes – particularly in their 'soaring' upward movement and the significance of moves of a semitone – are interrelated in the four movements), the verses throw particular light on the concluding slow Epilogue, which is a true concerto in the demands it makes on the soloist, yet at the same time avoids empty display. The solo part contains little, if anything, that is not thematic, and with much cunning interplay between violinist and orchestra the whole strongly felt argument is expressed with a conciseness and authority that augur extremely well for this composer's future.<sup>23</sup>

Composed shortly after the violin concerto, between May and June 1952, the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Strings and Timpani* Opus 15 displays an odd ensemble of solo instruments, the orchestra limited to strings perhaps to reflect the quiet nature of the harp and, to a lesser extent, the viola. Leighton himself wrote the following programme note on the concerto:

This Concerto was written in 1952 and first performed in the following year by Frederick Riddle and the Harvey Phillips String Orchestra, who have also given broadcasts of the work on the B.B.C.

Each of the three movements tries to express a particular mood in a concise fashion, exploring also the unusual combination of solo instruments.<sup>24</sup>

Premiered on 5 September 1954 in a broadcast by Frederick Riddle (viola), Renata Scheffell-Stein (Harp) and the Harvey Phillips String Orchestra conducted by Harvey Phillips, *The Strad* reported in its October issue the same year:

By far the most interesting item performed by the Harvey Phillips String Orchestra on September 5 was the comparatively youthful Kenneth Leighton's Concerto for viola, harp, timpani and strings. Born in 1929 its composer refrains from adopting that all-out modernistic style now so prevalent and so formidable to the amateur instrumentalist. Judging by honours already won there is here promise of an usually high order.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Anon., *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra Opus 12*, (Henry Wood Prom concert programme, 31 August 1954).

<sup>24</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Viola, Harp Timpani and Strings Opus 15*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

<sup>25</sup> Anon., Review of Harvey Phillips String Orchestra, (*The Strad*, October 1954), 203-204.

Throughout this concerto, the viola is the only solo instrument to play a full role – the harp does not appear until the second movement and does not have many moments as a soloist, generally playing within the usual parameter of this instrument within an orchestra. Essentially, from the outset, it is a viola concerto.

*Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Orchestra*, was composed between June and July 1952. It is related to the earlier version for piano and full orchestra, but is individual, and considerably shorter. The orchestral version was also completed much more quickly than the work for piano and orchestra. The Neapolitan themes used by Leighton are, to an extent, shared in both works. Both works remain unpublished today and, as far as is known, neither work has been performed.

*São Paulo: Toccata Brasiliana for Two Pianos* was composed in August 1952, although it was entered into the composition books as *San Paolo*.<sup>26</sup> The manuscript itself, however contains the former version, although without the subtitle of *Toccata Brasiliana*. Presumed lost, it was only rediscovered as recently as 2004 by Josephine Leighton among some of Leighton's papers in her home in Edinburgh. The orchestral work of the same title, begun at around the same time and completed in June 1953, also has a similar inconsistency; *São Paulo* is entered into the composition book and contained on the cover page of the manuscript, while the title at the top of the score itself is *San Paolo*. With the descriptions and the scale of each of the pieces there is no evidence that the manuscript versions are not the same

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<sup>26</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composition Book* (Nos. One, Two and Three), (unpublished).



works listed in the composition books. With the slower section in the middle of *São Paulo*, it could almost be a short three-movement sonata in which the movements run together. The consistent and extremely varied use and transformation of melodic material from the opening two subjects disguise this; instead the appearance is one of an extremely coherent and sufficiently diverse piece of music. There is no record of any public performance of this work, and no markings to suggest otherwise on the score; being missing for so long, it of course has never been published.

**Table 3.2:** Compositions from September 1952 to September 1953

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Sept. – Dec. 1952	<i>Overture for a Festival (Coronation Overture) *</i>	full orch.	-
Jan. – March 1953	<i>Sonata No. 2 for Piano</i>	pf	17
Aug. 1952 – June 1953	<i>São Paulo: Symphonic Poem for Full Orchestra</i>	full orch.	-
June – Sept. 1953	<i>Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano</i>	vln, pf	20
Aug. – Sept. 1953	<i>A Christmas Caroll</i>	solo Bar, SATB, full orchestra	21

In the remainder of 1952, a number of works that were written following the *Concerto for Viola and Harp* Opus 15 never saw publication. Along with *Napoli: Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra*, completed earlier in the year, a version for orchestra only was completed between June and July. Two further works were completed – *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira for Two Pianos* written in August, and *Overture for a Festival* (subtitled *Coronation Overture* in the first composition book) for full orchestra, written between September and December. Also begun in the second half of 1952 was *São Paulo: Symphonic Suite for Large Orchestra*, which wasn't completed until June of 1953. The above table details those works completed in Deal.



Leighton's next published and significant instrumental work was the *Sonata No. 2 for Piano* Opus 17. Written between January and March of 1953 the work was dedicated to Eric Parkin, a stalwart of British piano music. It was to be the beginning of a productive year of writing for the piano, with subsequent piano writing that year consisting of the *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22, the unpublished *Winter Scenes for Piano*, and the *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20.

The *Sonata No. 2 for Piano* Opus 17, was well received when it reached publication in 1954, one of Leighton's most encouraging reviews so far reading as follows:

A fine work by one of the most promising of our younger composers. Indeed, among our younger men, I should say he and [Philip] Cannon give British music most cause for hope. The Sonata has three movements. The first is mainly dramatic, and even its quieter passages are agitated. But there are one or two moments of lyrical beauty. The whole movement is well-rounded and the ideas [are] closely integrated. The melodies of the slow movement, free as air, are a sheer joy, and the subsidiary harmonies and counterpoint form a fascinating pattern. The last movement is a set of variations on a quiet but sonorous theme. Here is a work that deserves frequent performance and should certainly be in the repertoire of every British pianist.<sup>27</sup>

From the opening of the first movement, the lyricism that characterises much of Leighton's music up until this point is once again evident in the main theme of the work – the Romanticism of earlier works is still very much present.

In May of 1953, Leighton married Lydia Vignapiano. From that point onwards Lydia left Italy to live in England. Mrs. Josephine Leighton recalls that:

'[...] they married [in] May of 1953. The flat they lived in overlooked a cemetery at the back, something Lydia didn't like at all. He always seemed to have his nose in a book

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<sup>27</sup> Anon., *Kenneth Leighton: Piano Sonata No. 2*, (Musical Opinion, September 1954).



and while he got on very well with his Marines, I don't think there was much in the way of socializing.<sup>28</sup>

In a letter dated 5 May 1953, Bernard Rose wrote the following to Leighton:

My dear Kenneth,

Bravo. What progress you have made since the Scherzo. Now that you are happily married you must let your music lose some of its foreboding – I felt this particularly this evening – but then you were feeling like that last spring!<sup>29</sup>

Rose goes in the letter to ask Leighton what he would like for a wedding present, and closes with 'I did enjoy the concerto'. The work that is been referred to here by Rose is most likely the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings*, which received its first performance in May 1953.

Continuing his considerable output that makes use of the piano in 1953, the *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 represents yet another leap forward in Leighton's growth as a composer. Despite being first performed by Frederick Grinke, the sonata was dedicated to Peter Gregory when it was published in 1956 by Lengnick. The pianist at the first performance was Leighton himself, and the premiere took place on 20 November 1954 at The Octagon in Bath. A review of the *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 in *The Listener*, reads as follows:

Here, it seems, is a composer with something of interest to say and the ability to say it cogently with an individual tone of voice. I will not pretend to have grasped, at a first hearing and without sight of the music, all the harmonic implications of a Passacaglia 'composed on a twelve-note theme, which is, however, used tonally'. What did leap to the ear, in listening to this slow movement was the composer's ability to sustain the

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<sup>28</sup> Leighton, Josephine, correspondence with Adam Binks, (20 May 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Rose, Bernard, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton, (5 May 1953).

tension over a large and beautifully wrought arc, without either over-straining it or allowing it to sag. Of the two fast movements, the finale seemed the most successful, possibly because it was the easiest to follow. It is gay in the classical rondo-tradition, and has a way of blossoming out into delightful snatches of melody – short-lived flowers, but delicious while they last. This is certainly a work one would like to hear again.<sup>30</sup>

The first London performance of the second violin sonata took place on 20 May 1955 in the Wigmore Hall, when Leighton accompanied Trevor Williams. Donald Mitchell reported some rather different thoughts on the music:

Mr. Leighton writes rather conservative music and has obviously been much impressed by the example of Walton, but his melodic invention is well above average and he has a living, as distinct from a calcified feeling for form. The first movement of this sonata was, in fact, a thoughtful, serious piece of music of some quality. The second movement, a Passacaglia, was less successful than the first; its material was not so interesting and the treatment of the theme was insufficiently varied. The finale proved to be empty of content and rather primitive in structure.<sup>31</sup>

The reference in the above quotation to Leighton's music being conservative is perhaps a little indicative of how Leighton, along with other contemporaries, was seriously expected to write music that perhaps displayed much stronger influences of serial techniques. It also reinforces the refusal of Leighton to relinquish Romantic and tonal qualities within his work – it is also important not to forget that Leighton did thoroughly absorb serial techniques, and combined them with his Romantic and English qualities in order to stretch the tonal aspects of his music rather than allowing them to dominate; this practice is likely to have been inspired and encouraged by study of the music of composers such as Luigi Dallapiccola, Paul Hindemith and Béla Bartók, who similarly incorporated serial techniques into tonal music.

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<sup>30</sup> Anon., *New Lamps and Old*, (Listener, July 1955).

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell, Donald, *London Music: Instrumental*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 96, No. 1349, July 1955).



The differing of opinion between reviewers is further demonstrated in the review that the second violin sonata received in *Music and Letters*:

A sterner passion informs Kenneth Leighton's second violin Sonata. It is written in a much more chromatic style than the earlier works and the melodic writing is less clear-cut and "tuneful". The effect is somewhat unrelieved, even in the first movement, in which the lineaments of sonata form can be seen. But there is an impressive variety of texture and figuration and a strong feeling for climax, especially in the second movement, a fine passacaglia. The work is technically exacting.<sup>32</sup>

The second violin sonata is one of the first pieces, along with *São Paulo* and the second piano sonata, that begin to exhibit Leighton's truly personal compositional style – with music that could be easily attributed to the composer. The importance of musical and thematic unity is becoming increasingly evident – through rhythmical, harmonic and melodic economical techniques within and between movements – and even between particular works, without necessarily detracting from the individuality and variation between compositions. Leighton's lyrical melodic qualities have been noted and identified, and this particular feature of his compositional style was only to dominate and develop further over time. An increasing element of (and confidence in the use of) counterpoint is extremely notable at this juncture in his stylistic development, as this represents the beginning of a major aspect of Leighton's later works. The counterpoint found in these most recent works is still limited in use, but there are clear signs that his ability in using this technique is becoming stronger, and that it will become a more common feature – he appears to be comfortable and at home with a degree of complexity in the part writing. The significant reliance on certain techniques dominate the creation of conflict and tension and the subsequent resolutions.

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<sup>32</sup> Keys, Ivor, *Reviews of Music: Kenneth Leighton, Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano*, (*Music and Letters*, Vol. 37, No. 4, October 1956), 419.

## Concertos and Orchestral Music

It is quite clear from the above tables, charting Leighton's compositional activities, that orchestral music, and in particular concertos, were the most important aspect of his output during these two years following his departure from Oxford. Together they represent the largest body of works remaining from this time, most of the individual works being of a substantial size. Each of the four works for orchestra with solo instrument dates from his time in Rome and Wakefield, along with the first two of the purely orchestral works from this period (*Overture: Primavera Romana* Opus 14 and the second version of *Napoli* for orchestra only). The remaining two works for orchestra only, *Overture for a Festival* and *São Paulo*, were completed during his time in Deal. The works for orchestra and solo instruments provide perhaps the most interesting points of discussion with three of the four works being published. The *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor* Opus 11 and the *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 were both revised before publication in 1959 and 1953 respectively and the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 was, as far as is known, published in its original version. Only one of the purely orchestral works from this time was published, *Primavera Romana*, the rest of the works effectively being withdrawn by Leighton at some stage, along with the piano and orchestra version of *Napoli*. Those works that did not make it into Leighton's own catalogue that he compiled shortly before his death in 1988 should be considered as withdrawn.

As the core of Leighton's compositional activity over this period these eight works show the most significant developments of style and technique to have taken place, with almost constant exploration of larger orchestral forms. Of the four concerto-type works, two are



scored for full orchestra plus solo instrument (the first piano concerto and *Napoli*), while the later violin and viola concertos are for the reduced forces of chamber orchestra and strings with timpani respectively. The four orchestral works without soloists are each scored for full orchestra, with none making use of a reduced orchestra, making these extended attempts at larger genres extremely significant as part of Leighton's increasingly rapid musical development. The first work from Leighton's time in Rome can also be include in this genre, *Just now the lilac is in bloom* Opus 10, although stylistically it is closer to his Oxford works.

One of the most noticeable advancements in Leighton's overall compositional style at this point is in the development of his musical language. Up until this stage as a composer, the majority of his works could not on the whole be labelled with any specific tonic key, with a general ambiguity characterised by a frequently changing tonic base. This trait does not change, despite one of the earliest works, the first piano concerto, being labelled as in D minor; the opening unison theme of the solo piano part is suggestive of D minor, but contains both A flats and B naturals (Ex. 3.1). Beyond the opening, the chromatic nature takes the movement firmly away from this key throughout the majority of the work. This first piano concerto and the subsequent works from this period would be more accurately described as keyless. The suggested minor key that opens the movement is, however, becoming typical, and the piano, violin and viola concertos all begin in a minor key.

Ex. 3.1: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 1 to 6



The many other similarities between the piano concerto and the violin concerto first become evident as both begin in a similar fashion. In much the same way as Leighton's works for strings written as a student begin softly and slowly, with staggered entries ascending from the bass, the piano and violin concertos both begin vigorously with immediate entries from the solo instrument. As well as being evocative of the opening of the piano concerto, the opening of the first movement of the violin concerto also looks back towards the faster sections of such works as *Symphony for Strings* Opus 3 and the *Veris Gratia Suite* Opus 9 – although there is more evidence of harmonic sophistication, features such as parallel movement and syncopation were now firmly established elements of Leighton's compositional style (Ex. 3.2).

Ex. 3.2: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton) – movement 1, bars 1 to 5







Variation is provided, however, by the viola concerto, which takes on a more passionate disposition, beginning softly and tensely with a perpetual ostinato rhythm in the cellos and basses that becomes a strong feature throughout the entire movement, before the introduction of the lyrical and chromatic theme of the viola. Leighton's own programme note refers to the first movement saying:

The Prelude is dark in colour and intense in mood, both subjects being announced by the solo viola, over a mixture of five-eight and six-eight rhythms. The opening rhythmic figure plays an important part throughout.<sup>33</sup>

Whereas the mood in the earlier works was a fresh and youthful exuberance, the mood in this period of his composition is noticeably darker, sombre and more anguished, (particularly in the expressive viola concerto) while still retaining a good deal of the youthful energy. This type of passion, involving much underlying tension and restlessness being revealed in the music, is indicative of Leighton's ongoing maturity, and in a lecture entitled *The Meaning of My Work*, Leighton spoke briefly about the final movement of the violin concerto in reference to self-expression: 'Here the music was written in the space of two days and it was the immediate and spontaneous expression of suffering after a period of youthful emotional experience'.<sup>34</sup> Leighton does not go into any more detail as to the

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<sup>33</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings Opus 15*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

<sup>34</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *The Meaning of My Work*, (unpublished lecture, date unknown).

emotional experience he had, but what is becoming increasingly evident, in this and many other works of his, is that composition is a vital medium of this self-expression and a way of communicating various types of emotion. Leighton goes as far to say 'As a composer I don't particularly like to look back – I prefer to look forward – but I know looking back that self-expression in the form of the direct expression of personal and emotional experience has played a very crucial part in several of my works'.<sup>35</sup>

The most notable addition to Leighton's musical language at this point is found with the gentle introduction of serial techniques. The main evidence of this is found in the main themes of each work – the opening theme of the piano and viola concertos contain eleven of the twelve notes of a note-row, the twelfth and remaining note found in the orchestra within close proximity. The violin concerto, however, has an opening theme that contains a complete note-row, which introduces all twelve notes by the second beat of bar five (see Ex. 3.2). While the statement of a note-row is found in these particular themes, as well as subsequent themes and movements, it is used fairly freely, with repetitions of notes within the rapid delivery of the twelve semitones. These themes could without exception be mistaken for tonal melodies and are always found within tonal surroundings; at this stage the serial method is clearly being used as a tool to stretch the existing tonal qualities of his musical style, and as a way of adding further colour to the harmonic content of his music. The second subject from the first movement of the violin concerto is a stricter twelve-tone note-row with no repetition of notes during the statement of the theme, although the programme note from the Prom concert states that the 'slightly less busy second subject

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



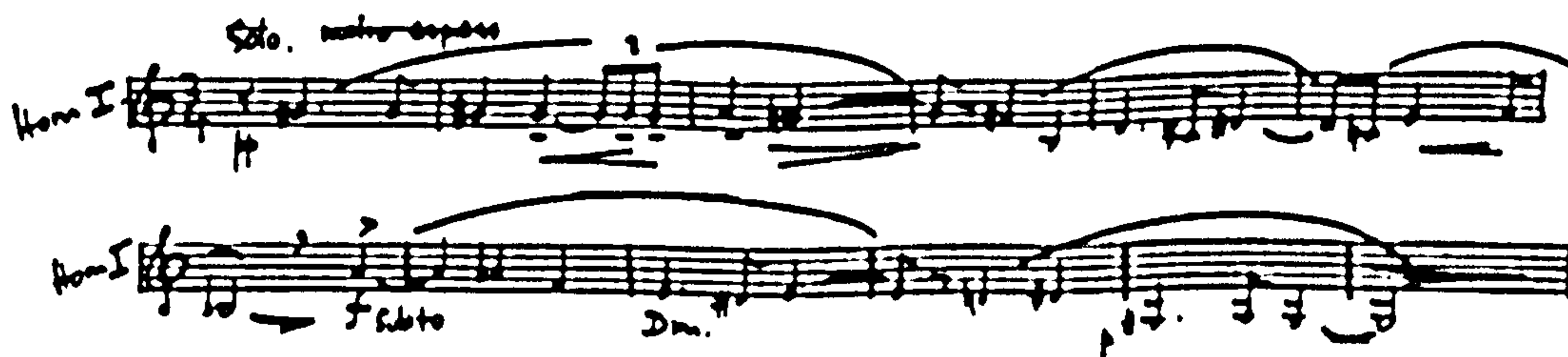
[...] uses all twelve semitones of the chromatic scale as if it were a Schönbergian note-series but the composer has emphatically stated that this was pure coincidence, that he is not a 'twelve-tone' composer, and that all the themes in the work were entirely spontaneous and uncalculated'<sup>36</sup> (Ex. 3.3).

Ex. 3.3: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton) – movement 1, bars 50 to 53



Perhaps the most distinctive indication of serial influence within the boundaries of tonality is found at the opening of the rhapsodic and lyrical second movement of the first piano concerto – the solo horn that opens the movement presents the main theme containing all twelve notes in a bold and unconcealed manner (Ex. 3.4). An exposed solo horn appears to be a favoured feature of Leighton's music being found at the opening of the second movement of the violin concerto as an accompaniment to the violin and at the very beginning of the much later *Symphony No. 1* Opus 42.

Ex. 3.4: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 2, bars 1 to 12



<sup>36</sup> Anon., *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12, (Promenade concert programme, 31 August 1954).

Serialism is not necessarily characteristic of every single work from this time, however; *Primavera Romana*, for example, is virtually exempt from this new influence providing something of a stylistic bridge between *Just now the lilac is in bloom* and the *Piano Concerto in D minor*. It is a little more characteristic of the English pastoral style of his Oxford compositions, which is now becoming only a remote constraint on his burgeoning distinctive musical character. The one song from this period, *You're so far away*, is also not subject to any serial techniques, belonging to the earlier style of his Oxford period. Within works, also, the extent of the chromatic and twelve-note influence noticeably changes between movements, with contrasting slower movements showing a clearer tendency away from these techniques. The twelve different notes of the chromatic scale are still stated, but over a longer period of time in a more subtle manner; in the *Scherzo and Trio* third movement of the violin concerto, the pizzicato accompaniment of the lower strings to the solo violin is more indicative of serial techniques, and therefore not the most instantly noticeable feature of the work.

This subtle introduction of serial techniques into Leighton's music is accompanied by a general increase in the use of dissonance; up until this point dissonance was to be found in the majority of his work, but was used only on occasion and was, more often than not, subtle in its execution. Each of the works in this genre and from this period contains a noticeable increase in dissonance (including, to an extent, *Primavera Romana*) that is now less apologetic and more obvious and vivid. This technique was to become one of the most important and defining techniques of Leighton's mature musical style, making these works of exceptional importance within his development. The intervals of the minor second, the



major seventh and the tritone within his harmonic writing are all vital to this new feature of his musical language (Ex. 3.5). This increased use of dissonance goes hand-in-hand with more chromatic features in movement and harmony that introduces a further element of tension, even within the most tranquil of movements, such as the sleepy mood of the second movement of the viola concerto (Ex. 3.6).

Ex. 3.5: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 (piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton) – movement 1, bars 196 to 201

The musical score for Ex. 3.5 is a piano reduction of the first movement of the Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra, Opus 12, by Kenneth Leighton, specifically bars 196 to 201. The score is written for Violin, Trumpet, Strings, and Piano. The Violin part is in the upper staff, featuring a complex, chromatic melody. The Trumpet part is in the middle staff, with a melodic line that includes a 'D' appassionate marking. The Strings part is in the lower staff, with a melodic line that includes a 'cresc.' marking. The Piano part is in the bottom staff, with a melodic line that includes a 'f (w w) (strings) > p' marking. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'D' appassionate. The score is a piano reduction by Kenneth Leighton.

Another of the most notable and central features of Leighton's development from this period of composition comes in the form of the rhythm and melody of the first five notes of the introductory solo theme in the piano concerto (Ex. 3.7).

Ex. 3.6: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 2, bars 1 to 11

The musical score for Ex. 3.6 is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Solo Viola, Harp, Timpani, Violins I and II, Violas I and II, and Cello/Double Bass. The tempo is marked 'Lento. A calmo. molto sostenuto.' and the dynamics range from 'ppp' to 'intense'. The second system continues the score for the same instruments, with the Solo Viola part featuring a melodic line and the strings providing harmonic support.

Ex. 3.7: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 1 to 2

The musical score for Ex. 3.7 is a short section of the theme, written for Solo Piano. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both in D minor. The tempo is marked 'Lento'.

This short section of the theme, whether in a major or minor key, was to become an undeniable fingerprint that was to unify a good deal of Leighton's entire catalogue as a



composer from this point. This little motif, used in a variety of ways, including inversions, augmentation, sequences or with an alternative (sometimes related) melody but always the same rhythm, occurs in too many works to mention all of them individually, being particularly prevalent in the later organ and choral music, but found in the majority of his works from this point onwards as an important fingerprint in one form or another. This is a feature that can be attributed to a number of composers in a quest for unity within a catalogue, but one of the most notable is perhaps Gerald Finzi; Diana McVeagh in her 2005 biography of Finzi highlights a number of recurring musical figures that define his musical style. One of the very first examples of the modification of this five-note theme is found shortly after its first original statement in the opening of the piano concerto, being inverted and altered melodically at the conclusion of the extended first piano theme (Ex. 3.8).

Ex. 3.8: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 7 to 10



There are a large number of further examples of this in the orchestral works, but most noticeably at the opening of the violin concerto in the first subject and transformed in various ways in the final movement of the same concerto altered rhythmically and melodically becoming dotted and a then extended into a rising sequence of oscillating triplets, this short theme providing a readily available cyclical element that unifies individual works (Ex. 3.9i, ii & iii).

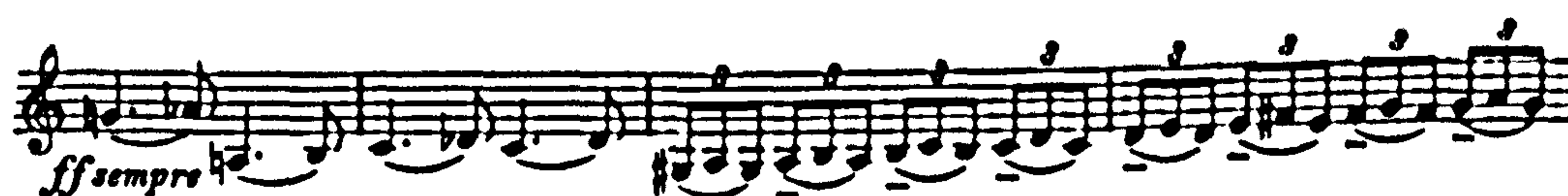
Ex. 3.9i: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 1, bars 16 to 17



Ex. 3.9ii: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 4, bars 27 to 28



Ex. 3.9iii: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 4, bars 48 to 51



The first movements of both the first piano concerto and the violin concerto conclude in a similar manner making use of this five-note theme in inversion; the close of the viola concerto, however, makes use only of the rhythm (Ex. 3.10).

Ex. 3.10: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 3, bars 253 to 256

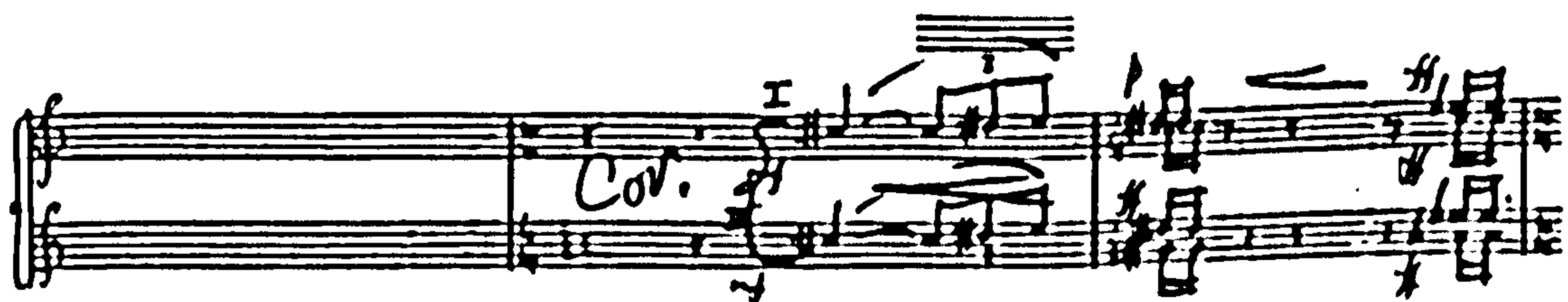




The various themes used by Leighton are related and unified in various ways, including shape, rhythm and melody, constantly creating new interest as each movement progresses. The significance of arch shapes in both themes and movements is becoming evident, along with an increasingly rhapsodic nature, especially within Leighton's slower writing. The musical economy that has been observed in many of his earlier works is a continuing feature, although this has now been taken a step further with the use of a number of themes simultaneously, and at times the integration of themes together.

With a substantial increase in the use of percussion within his works, themes now take on the dimension of rhythm as well as melody. In *Primavera Romana* the three main themes of the work are rhythmic, and can take on different melodic guises within the relentless stating and often combining of each one, both in whole or fragmented. The combining of themes in this overture can clearly be seen in the horn parts at bars 46 and 47 (Ex. 3.11).

Ex. 3.11: *Primavera Romana* Opus 14 – bar 46 to 47



The importance of unity between movements and works is to be seen, with the sharing of musical ideas on both levels; the *Finale* of the viola concerto makes clear use of the main theme of the *Nocturne* from the same concerto, whereas the unusual sequence of trills from the first movement cadenza of the violin concerto are also to be found in the cadenza in the *Finale* of the viola concerto (Ex. 3.12i & ii).

Ex. 3.12i: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 1, bars 148 to 155



Ex. 3.12ii: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 3, bars 178 to 182



The rhythmic theme in the clarinets and bassoons at bar 33 of *Primavera Romana* is indicative of the syncopation found in abundance in Leighton's mature style (Ex. 3.13). Many more examples of syncopation and accents off the main beat of the bar are to be found within these works, providing a glimpse towards later works, and a further step towards the ambiguity of meter to accompany the ambiguity of key and provide another element of variation. A rapidly and frequently changing time signature is part of this new uncertainty, while the insertion of 6/8 rhythms into bars of 3/4 provides further unpredictability.



Ex. 3.13: *Primavera Romana* Opus 14 – bar 33 to 35



One of the most obvious facets of Leighton's technique at this time, however, is his developing abilities for orchestration. On the whole, with much more experimentation on a larger canvas, and with the increased number of instruments available, the need to think in an orchestral manner, as opposed to as a pianist, was pressing and vital to his continuing progress. Of the early orchestral works from Oxford, most of those for strings only can be seen to have been conceived at the piano, but the increased complexity and detail of the orchestration points towards an almost whole-scale departure from this technique. *Just now the lilac is in bloom* does not show a great deal of progression in this area, particularly in the predictable use of strings at the opening of the work (Ex. 3.14) There a few aspects of the string textures that indicate a departure from his earlier style, such as the following passage close to the opening of the fourth movement (Ex. 3.15)

*Primavera Romana* is still fairly brief as a whole, but is a substantial undertaking in itself in terms of progression within his style of orchestration that begins a substantial increase in writing for these forces.

Ex. 3.14: *Just now the lilac is in bloom* Opus 10 – movement 1, bars 1 to 5

Baritone Solo

Lento ma non troppo  
molto espressivo

Violina I

Violina II

Viola

Violoncello

Double basses

Baritone Solo: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo and mood markings are "Lento ma non troppo" and "molto espressivo".

Violina I: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "p" (piano) and a crescendo marking "cresc.".

Violina II: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Viola: The score shows a single staff with an alto clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Violoncello: The score shows a single staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Double basses: The score shows a single staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp.

Ex. 3.15: *Just now the lilac is in bloom* Opus 10 – movement 4, bars 9 to 11

— of thought. They love the Good; They wor - ship

(giocoso)

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

ff

arco

Baritone Solo: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes lyrics: "— of thought. They love the Good; They wor - ship".

(giocoso): The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp.

pizz.: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "f" (forte) and a pizzicato marking "pizz.".

pizz.: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "f" and a pizzicato marking "pizz.".

pizz.: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "f" and a pizzicato marking "pizz.".

pizz.: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "f" and a pizzicato marking "pizz.".

ff: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "ff" (fortissimo) and a pizzicato marking "pizz.".

arco: The score shows a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. It includes a dynamic marking "f" and an arco marking "arco".

Leighton's consideration for including only the most appropriate material or instrumentation, however, is supported by his brief note on the second movement of the viola concerto, which reads as follows:



The harp is introduced for the first time in the slow Nocturne, which bears a quotation from Keats's Sonnet "To Sleep" –

"Then save me, or the passed day will shine  
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes"<sup>37</sup>

There is ample room in the concertos and orchestral works for experimentation with orchestration, and the inspired inclusion of the harp within the viola concerto is a prime example. The harp and strings are deftly made to complement each other, the harp enhancing the accompaniment with another dimension of texture with an often lightly percussive effect; in bar 55 of the third movement harp arpeggios are found against gently syncopated pizzicato chords (Ex. 3.16). Within the same concerto, the use of shimmering tremolo strings hovering above the viola soloist provides another effective variation (Ex. 3.17).

Ex. 3.16: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 3, bars 55 to 60

The musical score for Ex. 3.16 shows the following parts and their characteristics in bars 55 to 60:

- Solo Vla:** A melodic line with a long note in bar 55.
- Harp:** Arpeggiated chords.
- I Vls:** Syncopated pizzicato chords.
- II Vls:** Syncopated pizzicato chords.
- Vla:** Syncopated pizzicato chords.
- Violoncello:** Syncopated pizzicato chords.
- C.B.:** A melodic line with a long note in bar 55.

<sup>37</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings Opus 15*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

Ex. 3.17: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 2, bars 7 to 11

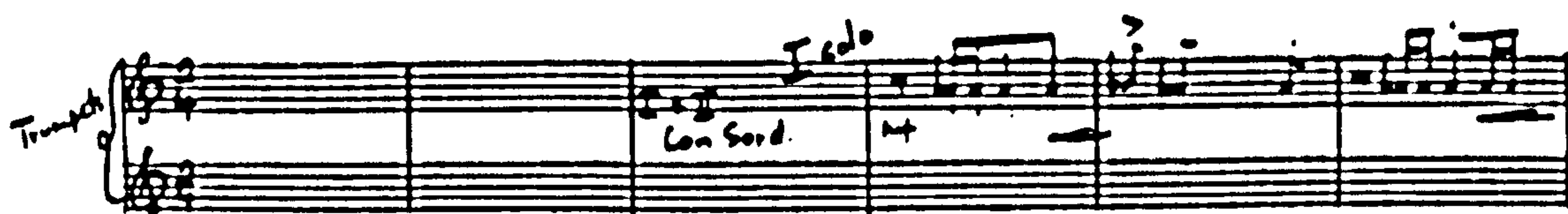
The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Solo Viola, Violin I, and Violin II. The Solo Viola part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It features a complex melodic line with many slurs and ties, indicating a technically demanding passage. The Violin I and Violin II parts are written on two staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. They provide harmonic support to the solo viola, with the Violin I part often playing sustained chords and the Violin II part providing a more active, rhythmic accompaniment. The score is for measures 7 through 11 of the second movement of the concerto.

The increased technical demands on all the performers involved are obvious in the orchestral works and concertos from this period. The increased complexity – coupled with the result of being away from a student atmosphere such as Oxford, where many of his compositions were perhaps written with limited forces in mind – shows clear signs of greater confidence in demanding the maximum abilities possible from the musicians. As part of the enhanced opportunities in terms of the number of instruments, Leighton is careful to make plentiful use of all the various parts and nuances of the orchestra. Most of the instruments used have a solo part to play at some point throughout the piano and violin concertos, quite often quoting fragments of the main melodic or rhythmic ideas of a work, serving as an aid to musical unity; even as part of the original statement of the main musical material, the various sections of the orchestra can play significant roles, this role going far beyond the soloist. As a theme is passed between sections following its first introduction, the many and varying accompaniment textures within the orchestra can also trace their origins, to an extent, to the plethora of piano textures found in the instrumental works. Instruments from within the orchestra, for example, are also used to anticipate the introduction of a new theme in a similar way to the piano within instrumental works – the second theme of the opening movement of the piano concerto is introduced in fragments



by the trumpet and then the woodwind before having its full statement on the piano (Ex. 3.18i, ii & iii).

**Ex. 3.18i:** *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 25 to 30



**Ex. 3.18ii:** *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 31 to 36



**Ex. 3.18iii:** *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 1, bars 37 to 42



Further examples of increased complexity are to be found in *Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Piano and Orchestra*, particularly in the virtuosic piano writing (Ex. 3.19). Although the orchestration within this work is not as developed as that in the published concertos, there are several points where individual instruments take on the virtuosic style of the piano (Ex. 3.20). The inclusion of two piano parts in *São Paulo: Symphonic Poem* also sees a higher

level of virtuosity, although again mostly restricted to these instrumental parts: in some ways it could be mistaken for a concerto for two pianos (Ex. 3.21).

Ex. 3.19: *Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Piano and Orchestra* (1952) – bars 21 to 25

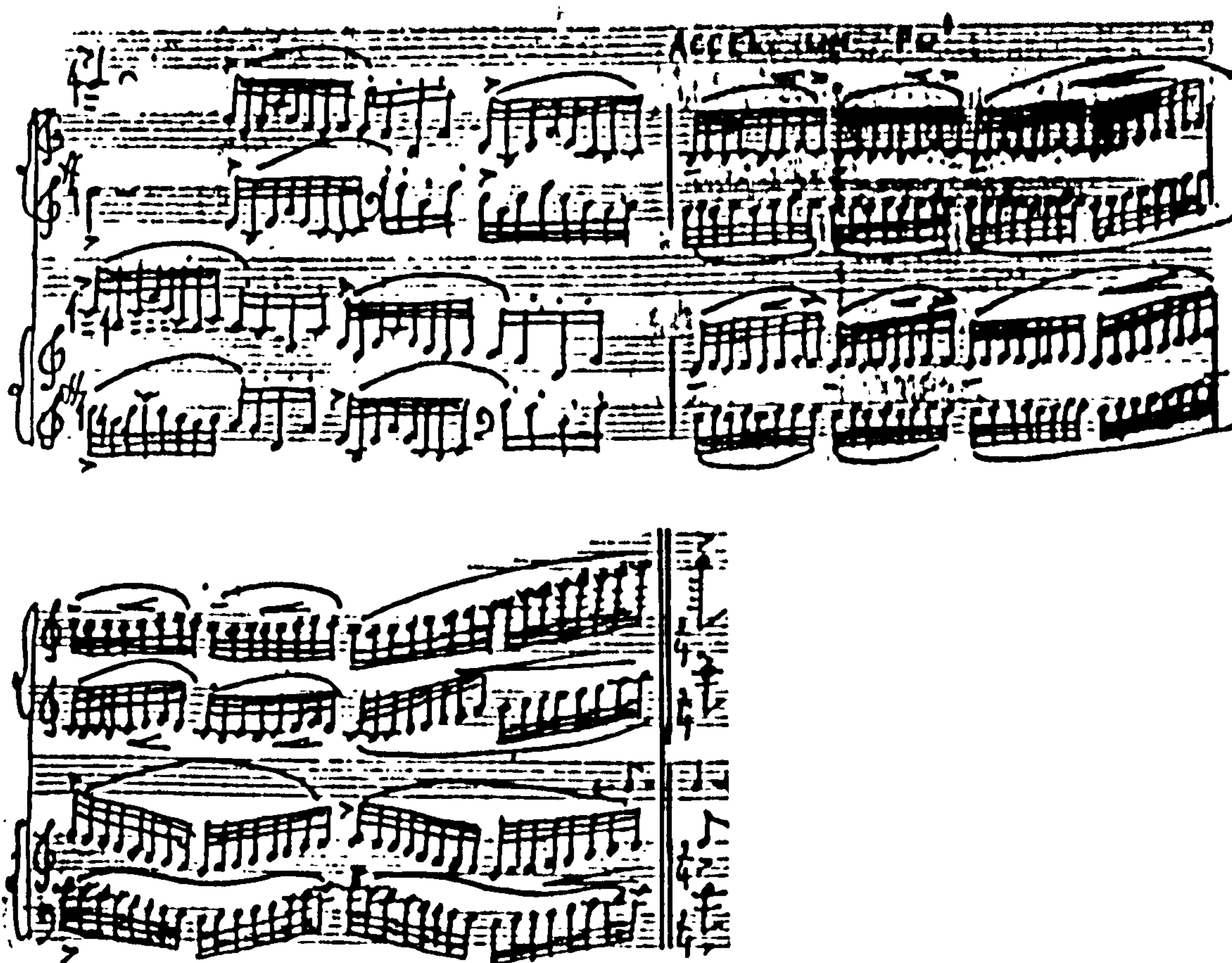


Ex. 3.20: *Napoli: Rhapsody on Neapolitan Themes for Piano and Orchestra* (1952) – bars 28 to 29

The progression in maturity of technique in the concertos and orchestral works is particularly noticeable. In those works scored for more than just string orchestra, the writing for orchestra is not, as might be expected, dominated by the strings. The almost formulaic earlier way of scoring found in his earlier orchestral works, focusing around the string section, is abandoned for a more free and inventive exploration of the possibilities beginning to open up for Leighton.

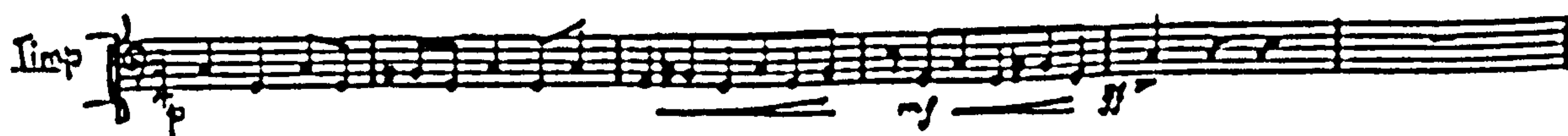


Ex. 3.21: *São Paulo: Symphonic Poem* (1953) – bars 33 to 35



The strings are typically the basis of Leighton's orchestra, but the brass and wind take on much more than a decorative role; the timpani, which was used mostly to enhance cadence points before, is now of much more importance, even introducing fragments of the first melodic theme in the concluding movement of the viola concerto in a solo capacity (Ex. 3.22).

Ex. 3.22: *Concerto for Viola, Harp, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 15 – movement 3, bars 1 to 5



Concluding his programme note on the viola concerto Leighton wrote of the third movement:

Solo Tympani [sic] announce the melodic and rhythmic figure which dominates the lively Finale. This is more straightforward in harmonic style than the previous movements though the second subject (again on solo viola) introduces a note of chromatic intensity. Discussion of the material slows down into a short cadenza for viola and harp, which makes references to the theme of the Nocturne. The final section recapitulates the opening themes in faster tempo, and in a more contrapuntal manner.<sup>38</sup>

The *Overture for a Festival*, does show signs of an increasing complexity within the orchestration and varied use of groups and textures. The work as a whole is clouded by a lack of invention present in other works from this period. Repetitive figures are important within its construction, although they tend to dominate from the opening bars of the work, particularly the quaver-crotchet-quaver rhythm used in a large number of other works by Leighton (Ex. 3.23).

The solo parts of concertos themselves are increasingly virtuosic and, throughout the first piano concerto, the part the soloist plays is relentless and demanding; the 352 bars of the first movement alone are dominated by an almost constant piano part, the only breaks for the soloist being between bars 55 to 66, 153 to 156, 291 to 292, and 335 to 339. The only other breaks in the movement are occasional one bar rests at bars 135, 141 and 159. In terms of writing for the solo instruments, however, the piano concerto is the most intensely virtuosic of all the three, presumably as Leighton was more acutely aware of the capabilities of his own instrument, whereas the violin and viola concertos are not as concerned with virtuosic display (particularly in the cadenzas), instead exploring structure, line and much more of the wide-ranging lyrical potential of the string instruments often involving some intense emotional energy within the faster movements. This is not to say, however, that

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



these concertos are completely without difficulty, the *Scherzo* of the violin concerto providing some fiendish writing.

Ex. 3.23: *Overture for a Festival for Full Orchestra* 1952 – bars 1 to 3

**ALLEGRO CON MOVTO**

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system contains staves for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet (Bb), Bassoon, Trumpet, Horn, Trombone, Tuba, Euphonium, and Cymbal. The second system contains staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The tempo marking 'ALLEGRO CON MOVTO' is centered above the first system. The score shows the initial entries of several instruments, with the strings providing a rhythmic foundation.

The way in which the solo instruments themselves are employed within Leighton's concertos owes much to the solo instrumental works composed up until this point; the interaction between orchestra and solo instrument undoubtedly has a base in these works, with elements of conversation, punctuation and broad complementing of each instrumental part found in his solo and piano works being carried across into the concertos. The

orchestra often punctuates the phrases of the solo instrument found at the opening of the piano and violin concertos. This is at times reversed in a variation of textures, such as at the recapitulation of the first movement, where the orchestra takes the main first theme while the piano punctuates in the form of a descending sequence. The piano is skilfully used in its interaction with the orchestra, conversing with the various sections and at times being an accompaniment to the various solos that occur in most sections of the orchestra throughout the work. The piano writing also shares much with the slightly later *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 in the virtuosity and overall Romantic nature of the work, whilst displaying the many other influences that Leighton was beginning to absorb, most notably those of the Second Viennese School, which was manifesting itself in various ways. The full range and enormous scope of the piano is made full use of by Leighton, exploring every avenue the instrument has to offer. The solo piano's roles are varied, acting as an accompanist in the development section of the first movement, adopting both chordal and rippling arpeggios, while taking a considerable share of the limelight; it is heard early on as a dominant force at the beginning of each movement.

With this greater variety of instruments and textures available, Leighton's characteristic series of climaxes within his works is allowed to be taken further – climaxes are larger as a result and can be prepared over a substantially longer period. Each section of a movement within the concertos and orchestral works from this period ends with a climax of some size and magnitude. This does not always mean full orchestra and a maximum volume of texture, but is often within the tension created by harmony and inventive orchestration of a smaller numbers of forces. On occasion Leighton does conclude sections quietly, such as



the end of the development of the third movement of the viola concerto, which provides a welcome contrast and variation.

A general feature of Leighton's works includes a number of contrasts, provided by variations, climactic tension, conflict and resolution, now facilitated by a wider orchestral palette. A more intense climax, for example, is found in the cadenza of the first piano concerto, which begins as a solo that is gradually joined by the rest of the orchestra; this begins with two solo horns, which are followed by timpani, strings and then wind, the full orchestra climaxing before the solo piano takes the movement into the recapitulation. Often a series of smaller climaxes will accumulate to form the larger pinnacle of a movement.

An important feature of the tension within the orchestration of these works involves the methods of its resolution. The most obvious technique for this used by Leighton involves a reduction in dynamics or orchestral texture, or both. Other methods of dispelling tension within a movement that do not necessarily involve a reduction in either volume or texture are usually found after slowly ascending passages; a change of direction is enforced at the crux of the tension and a rapidly, or an equally slowly, descending passage ensues as can be seen in the piano and string parts in the following example from the slow movement from the piano concerto (Ex. 3.24).

Ex. 3.24: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 2, bars 80 to 83

The image displays a musical score for piano and orchestra, specifically bars 80 to 83 of the second movement of the Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 11. The score is written for piano and orchestra, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings. The piano part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs), and the orchestra part is written on multiple staves. The key signature is D minor (three flats). The tempo/mood is marked 'Allegro'. The score shows a climactic cadenza in the piano part, with a large crescendo leading to a fortissimo (f) dynamic. The orchestra part provides a rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment, with various instruments contributing to the overall texture. The notation includes many beamed notes, slurs, and dynamic markings such as 'p', 'f', and 'cresc.'.

A complete contrast is also a regular technique; for example, the climactic cadenza of the *Scherzo* movement of the violin concerto is juxtaposed with the calm of the following trio (Ex. 3.25) – tension then increases gradually throughout the trio leading up to the recapitulation of the *Scherzo*. Perhaps in a bid not to appear predictable, a large climax is not necessarily a customary feature of all works from around this time – in the final movement of the viola concerto, there is no crux of the movement in this fashion, providing an unexpected but not necessarily disappointing variation. In general a gentle increase in dramatic use of dynamics helps Leighton to convey the emotions of various points throughout each of these works, with a continuing use of precise performance markings.



Ex. 3.25: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 3, bars 59 to 76

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a concerto movement. The first system features a Violin part (labeled 'Violin' at the bottom) and a Piano accompaniment (labeled 'Piano' at the bottom). The Violin part is marked 'veloce' and 'a tempo', while the Piano part is marked 'dim.'. The second system shows a Piano part (labeled 'Piano' at the bottom) and a Flute part (labeled '(Flute)' at the bottom). The Piano part is marked 'senza rall.' and 'pp', while the Flute part is marked 'pp'. The third system shows a Piano part (labeled 'Piano' at the bottom) and a Bassoon part (labeled '(Bassoon)' at the bottom). The Piano part is marked 'TRIO (ironico)' and 'pp', while the Bassoon part is marked 'pp'.

In Leighton's earlier student works a tentative use of the most basic counterpoint had been observed, mostly of a repetitive nature. This feature, out of necessity to be interesting, and particularly with a greater number of instrumental lines being used in these larger works, is now much more confident and extended. While still mostly imitative and not particularly venturing towards full-blown fugal writing, the interweaving of lines and musical ideas is a useful exercise in managing this number of instruments and combining them with more extensive musical ideas. It also proves a useful method of creating and building tension with the addition of each line. It is found to some extent in the majority of the concertos and orchestral works written through this period. In the accompanied cadenza of the first

movement of the piano concerto, the orchestra introduces the lower strings and wind first and build upwards through the orchestra (an increasingly frequent and favoured combination used by Leighton), the upper strings and the solo piano each take on separate lines that build gradually into a dense section of writing. The third movement of the same concerto has an extended period of counterpoint that builds from the first violins downwards at the beginning of the recapitulation section from bar 370 (Ex. 3.26).

Ex. 3.26: *Concerto in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11 – movement 3, bars 370 to 381



As ever within Leighton's music he continues to use traditional features, continually combining them with more recent and innovative techniques in order to create an unusual, fresh appearance and overall effect. The abundance of textures already discussed is essential for the traditional development sections, which typically use as many techniques as is feasible to insert as many inversions, mutations, and disguises of the musical material as he can invent. These traditional features are much more obvious in *Just now the lilac is in bloom*, which shows much of the English pastoral nature of his earlier works. In the main, the lyrical style that has come to characterise much of Leighton's slower melodic material is evident in this work, particularly in the responsive baritone line of the work (Ex. 3.27).



Ex. 3.27: *Just now the lilac is in bloom* Opus 10: movement 1, bars 11 to 27

Just now the lilac is in  
bloom, All be - fore my lit - tle room; And in my flower beds, -  
I think, smile the car - na - tion and the pink; And down the bor - ders, -  
well I know, The po - ppy and the pan - sy blow.....

The ambiguity of key commonly seen in Leighton's works is found in the use of unison notes and long chords containing just the tonic and the fifth, leaving the listener to make up their mind as to the resultant tonality of a movement or section, such as at the conclusion of the second movement of the violin concerto (Ex. 3.28). Typical Leighton features from earlier works still persist as part of his mounting stylistic qualities. The use of many different and unrelated keys is a continuing and developing trait, particularly at a point of growing tension. The sustained employment of both the scherzo and rondo within these works shows a continuing tendency towards including the familiar within his own development.

Ex. 3.28: *Concerto for Violin and Small Orchestra* Opus 12 – movement 2, bars 113 to 120

un poco rall.  
largo  
dim. pp - niente

Throughout the orchestral works and concertos of this period, the importance of form and structure within Leighton's music begins to become quite clear; each movement has a structure of some kind. It is not necessarily rigid in each case, although the influence of sonata form is still quite vivid. It is, however, an extended and more convoluted sonata form that does not occur in exactly the same way more than any one time – in a way it is disguised and diluted, but the underlying strength the structure gives to the music becomes more obvious with each subsequent work. In the first piano concerto there is a clear use of traditional forms, being in a typical three-movement fast-slow-fast arrangement; the first movement of the same concerto has a clear sonata form construction, although there is an element of blurring between the sections in order to present a more lucid structure as a whole.

The cadenza in the first movement prior to the recapitulation is a typical feature within the sonata form of Leighton's concertos, being found also in the violin and viola concertos, each time, at some level, derivative of musical material from the rest of the movement. The development sections and recapitulations that are inevitably used by Leighton within these works are not as straightforward as they perhaps were in his earlier student works, not necessarily involving appearances of each main theme of the movement in strict order. In the delivery of the original themes themselves it is interesting to see how a contrast is gained between the first and second subject, the second often being slower and more lyrical in nature.



## Chamber and Instrumental Music

In looking at the genres of chamber and instrumental music in the two years following Leighton's departure from Oxford, it can be seen that neither chamber nor instrumental music were of particular importance to him at this time, with only one work remaining from each year, *Quartet* and *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20. The second violin sonata is the more significant of the two compositions here; written some two years after the *Quartet*, and towards the end of the period being looked at in this chapter, it almost provides a summary of how Leighton has progressed over this period of further study and work in two very different locations.

The *Quartet* provides a significantly experimental work within Leighton's output over this period. Unusually for Leighton for a work of this scale, it was written over a long period of time, which was possibly as a result of being composed alongside the first piano concerto. When comparing the level of progress between the two works however, the concerto appears in every way to be much further ahead in terms of general development. It is a substantial work at around 21 minutes in length, and it appears to demonstrate Leighton trying to make full use of the four individual lines, with some of his densest counterpoint so far. It is in a typical four-movement arrangement for Leighton, with a fast and slow first and second movement followed by a brief *Intermezzo* and a closing *Rondo*. Mostly, it is rather relentless in overall character and there is little variation in the way of texture, with all four players being employed the majority of the time. Sufficient variation is a vital challenge to be overcome in writing in such an exposed medium, and the *Quartet* suffers as a result; this

lack of invention in textural techniques of this work creates an impenetrable character, particularly in the second movement, which is marked *quasi una Marcia funebre* (Ex. 3.29).

Ex. 3.29: *Quartet* 1951 – movement 2, bars 1 to 4



When compared to the first violin sonata, the second sonata, following a gap of four years, shows only one or two similarities; the length and general scale of the second sonata is around the same as that of the earlier work, with similar overall Romantic qualities that manifest themselves in Leighton's harmonic language and intensely lyrical nature, although now increasingly more complex and with further developmental features. These can mostly be seen in the general structure, which still incorporates traditional forms, but also in the use of musical material and a wider variation of textures used in interaction with the solo instrument. While maintaining such typical elements as imitative writing, the relationship between the piano and the solo instrument is on a more advanced level; as can be seen from the very opening bars of the work; the contrary movement of the right hand of the



piano and the violin create a substantial intensity within the work with obvious dissonance from the start and an eventual ambiguity of key that persists throughout (Ex. 3.30).

Ex. 3.30: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 1, bars 1 to 4

Moderato patetico (♩ = 84.88)

Violin

Pianoforte

*pp*

*con Pedale*

Similarities with some of Leighton's other works are also to be observed, with the musical unity found within and between many of his compositions also present in the second violin sonata. A number of features recur between the movements, providing a strong cyclical element that binds the music together: the double-dotted rhythm that characterises the opening of the first movement, for example, is found in the accompaniment to the passacaglia theme of the second movement, while the passacaglia theme itself is an augmented version of the first violin theme from the first movement (see Ex. 3.30 and 3.31).

Ex. 3.31: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 2, bars 1 to 8

Passacaglia  
Lento (♩ = 48-50)

sostenuto  
pp  
con Ard.

The ubiquitous rhythm of the five-note theme found in the opening bars of the first piano concerto is also found here as part of the first subject stated in the violin at bar 11 and in the piano accompaniment as part of a sequence at bar 18 of the final movement (Ex. 3.32i & ii).

Ex. 3.32i: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 3, bars 11 to 12

sostenuto  
pp

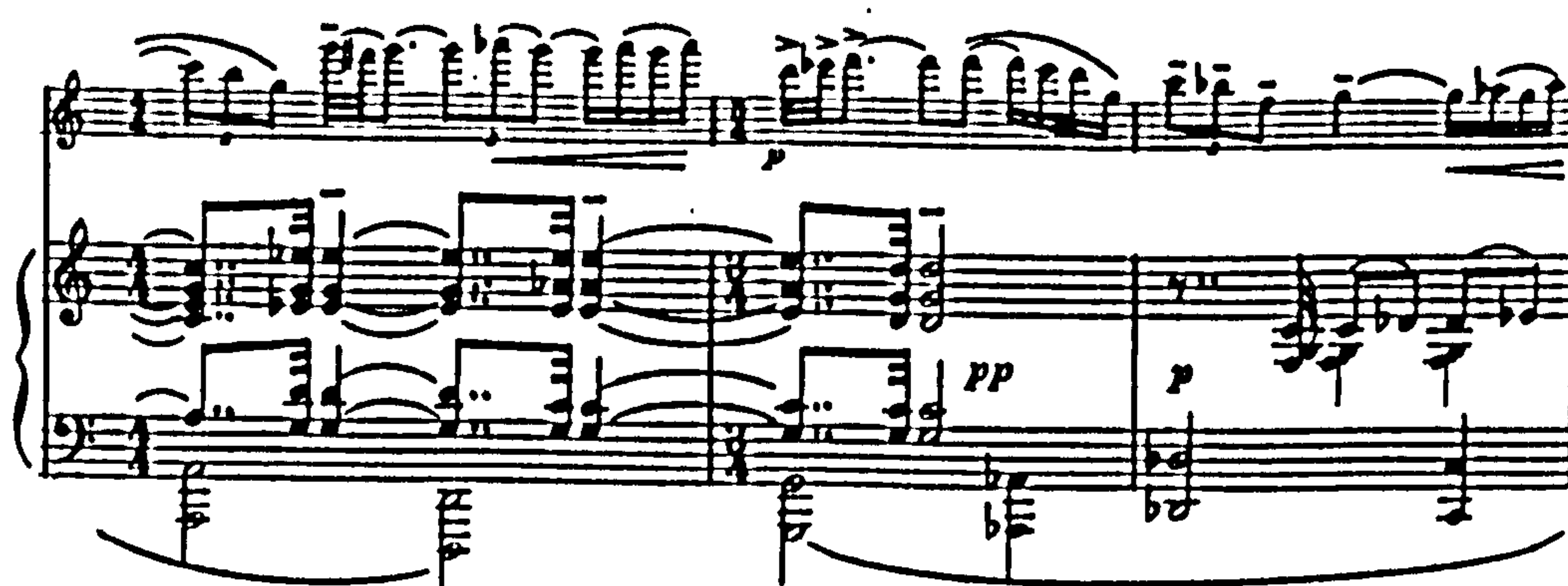
Ex. 3.32ii: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 3, bars 18 to 20

sostenuto  
pp



As with the earlier first violin sonata, the role of the piano in the second sonata is not merely secondary to that of the violin, but the accompaniment itself plays an integral part within the music. In fact the pianist takes an almost equal part to the violin, the density and range of the textures found in the work at times signifying an orchestral vision within the writing. In the *Passacaglia* movement of the second sonata, the piano chords that occur between the notes of the slow-moving and repetitive theme, become large enough to require two hands to play them (Ex. 3.33), while the general number of chords to be spread by the pianist as a result of the range is noticeably increased throughout the work, as Leighton begins to cover as much of the piano range as is possible with only two hands.

Ex. 3.33: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 2, bars 12 to 14



The piano textures themselves used by Leighton in this work, along with the *Sonata No. 2 for Piano* Opus 17, show some of the most varied and developed piano techniques so far seen in Leighton's output. The wide range of possibilities that are now within his capabilities allow him to introduce a larger selection of accompaniment textures to the music on a more frequent basis; this continuous input of ideas is imperative to the constant evolution and development of a movement, not allowing the music a moment of stagnation. Indeed, within the first 20 bars of the first movement of the second violin sonata, the piano texture changes noticeably no fewer than five times.

This rapidly and frequently changing texture found within Leighton's writing is part of a larger feature of variation and evolution within the music. Although he is still economical in terms of his use of musical material, there is a clear increase in confidence that finds him introducing more melodic (and sometimes rhythmic) ideas, which are used alongside the main themes of a movement and indicate a general increasing complexity within his compositions. The *Passacaglia* movement in itself is once again an ideal example of this: presenting a set of variations on a short recurring theme that begins in the bass, Leighton modifies the texture and the theme itself to the extent that the *Passacaglia* theme eventually becomes hidden, and subsequently revealed again in an overall arch-like structure of dynamics and texture. The theme itself is, at various points, found in both the violin part and other parts of the piano writing, while also going through a series of transpositions, melodic and rhythmic alterations, inversions and fragmentation. The arch-form found in the *Passacaglia* movement, and already discussed as a feature of the *Elegy for Cello and Piano* Opus 5 in chapter two, is also a facet of many of the various themes and extended phrases of the work; many of Leighton's extended musical ideas are given a rising and then falling shape over both a short and long period, as in the first subject of the opening movement of the second violin sonata (Ex. 3.34).

An underlying tension that is beginning to pervade much of Leighton's music in this period is found from the opening of the second violin sonata. The suggested minor key that is found at the opening of the majority of his works at this time is once again evident, the



angst heightened by a pulsing and syncopated pedal G over three octaves in the lower half of the piano range.

Ex. 3.34: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 1, bars 10 to 15

The musical score for Example 3.34 is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a tempo marking 'A Agitato' above the violin staff. It shows the violin and piano parts for bars 10 to 15. The second system continues the musical development. The third system concludes the passage with a double bar line and repeat signs. The piano part features a prominent pedal point in the lower register.

The second movement also shows an intense quality, with a deeply lyrical theme that is both improvisatory and rhapsodic in nature. The importance of contrasts within the music is manifest in Leighton's style by this point, and is the provider of much of the profound nature of his writing. There are many opportunities for contrast within the second violin sonata, from the overall structure – with the movements in a fast-slow-fast arrangement providing obvious differences between each other – to smaller and more subtle contrasts, such as step movement juxtaposed with larger intervals within the melodic material – for example, the wandering violin part at the beginning of both the first and second

movements (Ex. 3.35). Conflict and resolution also provide a series of contrasts with a number of climaxes followed by resolutions, which are built up over both short and long periods, providing frequent changes in both dynamics and texture.

Ex. 3.35: *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* Opus 20 – movement 2, bars 21 to 25

The musical score for Example 3.35 consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows the Violin and Piano parts for bars 21 to 25. The Violin part has a melodic line with a crescendo and a change in tempo to 'Piu mosso' at bar 24. The Piano part has a rhythmic accompaniment with a crescendo and a change in tempo to 'Piu mosso' at bar 24. The score is marked with 'cresc.' and 'Piu mosso Sul G al Segno ardentissimo'.

As expected, some of Leighton's more traditional characteristics are found in the second violin sonata, with both sonata and rondo forms making an appearance. Where these forms are found, increasingly they are stretched and altered, as there is now an evident and increasing awareness in his music of just how malleable form and construction can be, with subtle blurring of the various sections of a particular form and at times even a reordering of the expected sections. There are a number of instances of this generally, but two of the most successful examples are found in the rondo theme of the final movement – which is irregular in its appearances between episodes – and the recapitulation of the sonata form of the first movement. A twist to the end of the first movement is offered by the unusual



order of the recapitulation of the original exposition, a new sequence consisting of the second subject, then the introduction, followed by the first subject.

### Piano Music

At first glance Leighton's output for his solo instrument was not particularly significant during this time. There is only one work for solo piano during this period, the *Sonata No. 2 for Piano* Opus 17 from early 1953. The other work that falls into this category is *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira for Two Pianos* from the summer of 1952. As has been already seen, though, two of the works under the category of concertos (the *Piano Concerto No. 1* and *Napoli*), the second violin sonata and *You're so far away* all contain the piano in a major role, demonstrating a continuous commitment to writing for the keyboard. There is, however, a seemingly clear diminishing reliance on the piano for composition.

The two works that fall under the banner of piano music are both significantly different. While *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira* shares a similar title to *São Paulo* the symphonic suite for orchestra (that incidentally also includes the piano in its scoring), the two works share only some stylistic elements with each other; the work for two pianos is still very much an individual work, and not merely an arrangement. A larger scope is seen, with the enhanced possibilities of two pianos allowing a more orchestral and varied vision – although this orchestral nature is also found in the more extensive *Sonata No. 2*. The *Theme and Variations* that conclude the three-movement piano sonata, is demonstrative of this larger construction within the work, with variations one, three, five, seven and eight of the eight variations requiring to be on three staves as opposed to the more frequently used two.

There are several further noticeable advancements in Leighton's piano writing within both works. A general development of a keener dominance of rhythmic inventiveness can be observed. In the score of *São Paulo*, Leighton makes it particularly clear just how rhythmically the work should be played; being a particularly fast work, he asks for *molto ritmico* in the tempo indication, and there are two further indications for the ostinato (*secco* and *senza ped.*). There is an abundance of syncopation and cross-rhythms associated with the South American style adopted by Leighton – an ambiguity of metre is a feature within the rhythmic sharpness that is beginning to pervade his works, and finds a useful outlet in *São Paulo* from bar 51 (Ex. 3.36). These advancing rhythmic techniques are also a feature of the second sonata, although a distinctly more pensive and considered Romantic and lyrical flavour is the main difference within the slightly later work.

Ex. 3.36: *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira* (1952) – bars 50 to 54



The ostinato at the beginning of *São Paulo* is indicative of earlier techniques, but is wholly appropriate to this assumed style. The use of sonata form in this one-movement piece is also important within the continuing use of form and structure of the majority of his works at this stage. As a whole, *São Paulo* could almost be a three-movement sonata contained



within its one movement, with its varied overall structure containing a slower central middle section. Other established techniques used in both *São Paulo* and the *Sonata No. 2* include an element of bitonality from bar 83 of *São Paulo* (Ex. 3.37), a diminishing (but still present) reliance on sequences to extend musical material, and a series of climaxes in conflict and resolution.

Ex. 3.37: *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira* (1952)– bars 82 to 85



The serial techniques that are influencing Leighton's compositions are only subtly employed within these two works, but perhaps most noticeably within the opening theme of the work played by the first pianist (Ex. 3.38). The *Sonata No. 2* is not particularly concerned with deliberate use of serial techniques, the twelve semitones of the scale within each movement being completed over a substantial period (over 19 bars in the first movement alone). The general style of writing within this sonata, however, is densely chromatic and appears to signal a great deal of unrest within the music commencing with the opening chromatic figure of the accompaniment (Ex. 3.39). The initial tension and unrest in the work continues throughout, with the chromatic nature once again providing an ambiguous sense of key from the falling figure of the opening onwards.

Ex. 3.38: *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira* (1952) – First piano, bars 6 to 15



Ex. 3.39: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 1, bars 1 to 3



The five-note theme from the first piano concerto makes a large number of appearances in *São Paulo*, appearing in the first theme stated by the first pianist, and being developed and being used frequently, mostly in its rhythmic format. The work itself even ends with a typical flourish containing a fragment taken from the musical material of the movement, in this case the five-note theme, as in the opening movement of the first piano concerto and of the violin concerto. The second subject of *São Paulo* at bar 63 offers a simplified version of the five-note theme above a syncopated gentle accompaniment (Ex. 3.40).



Ex. 3.40: *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira* (1952) – First piano, bar 63

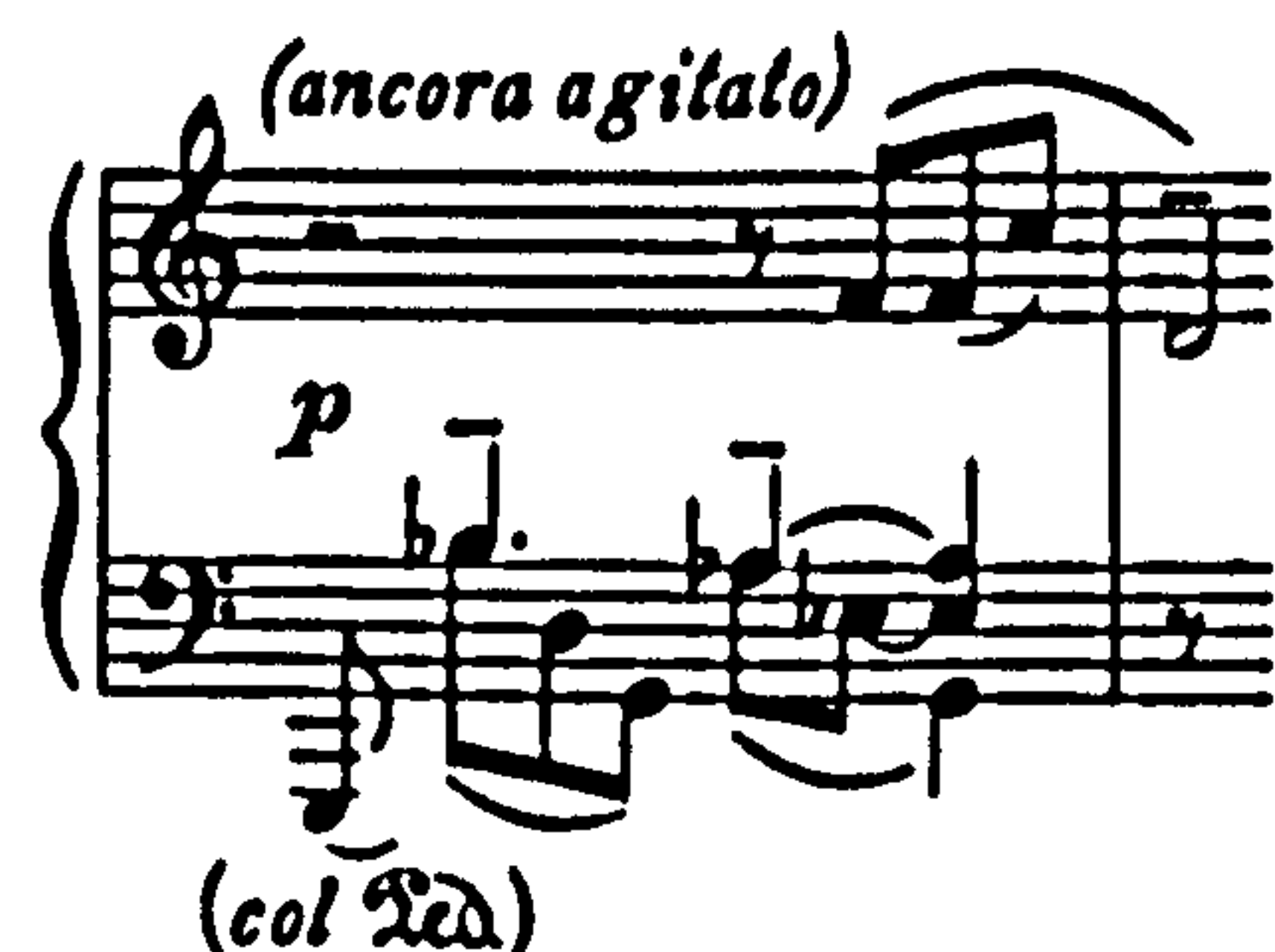


The arch-structure beginning to be heard in Leighton's work, in terms of dynamics, textures and shapes within themes, is a major feature in the *Sonata No. 2*. A typical pattern is for Leighton to increase the density of textures in conjunction with the general dynamic towards the climax of a movement and then for these to become thinner and reduce towards a return of the opening texture.

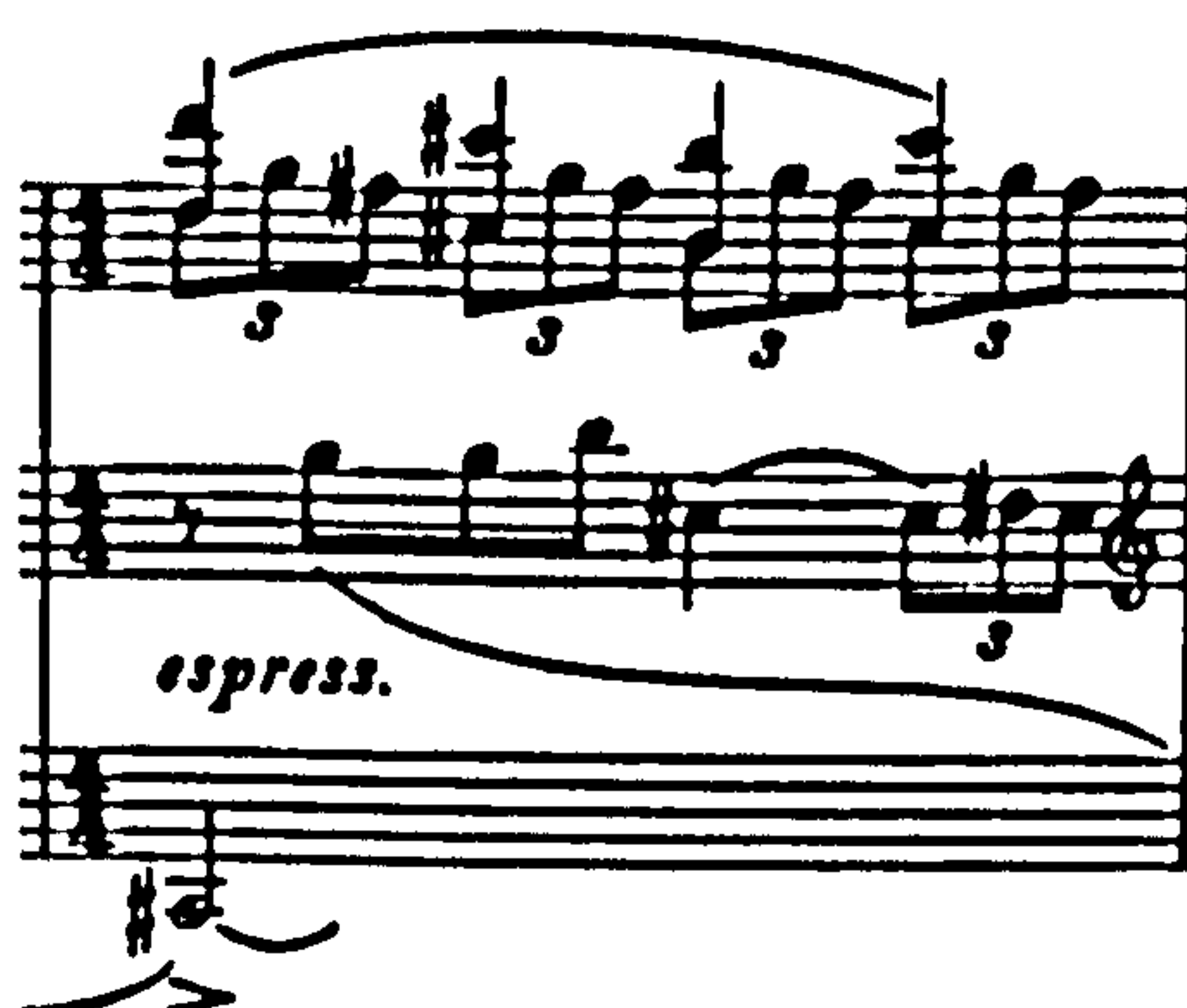
Leighton's musical economy is to be found, particularly, in the first movement of the *Sonata No. 2*, the seed of which is provided by the opening four notes of the first subject in bar two (see Ex.3.39 above). The shape of this short melodic figure permeates themes throughout the rest of the movement (also found in inversion), and determines the shape of the movement as a whole. The second subject of the first movement from bar 32 is also of a rising and falling shape (Ex. 3.41) and from bar 41 the reverse of the theme is found in augmentation in an ascending sequence, decorated with rising and falling triplet quavers (Ex. 3.42). The overall direction of the movement is that of rising with accumulating tension, which is eventually released following the arrival, as the recapitulation begins, at a peak within the structure, the movement ending as it began with the opening falling chromatic figure. Typically the opening of the second and following movement represents a

complete contrast to the constantly rising first movement, opening with a harmonised slowly-descending arpeggio (Ex. 3.43).

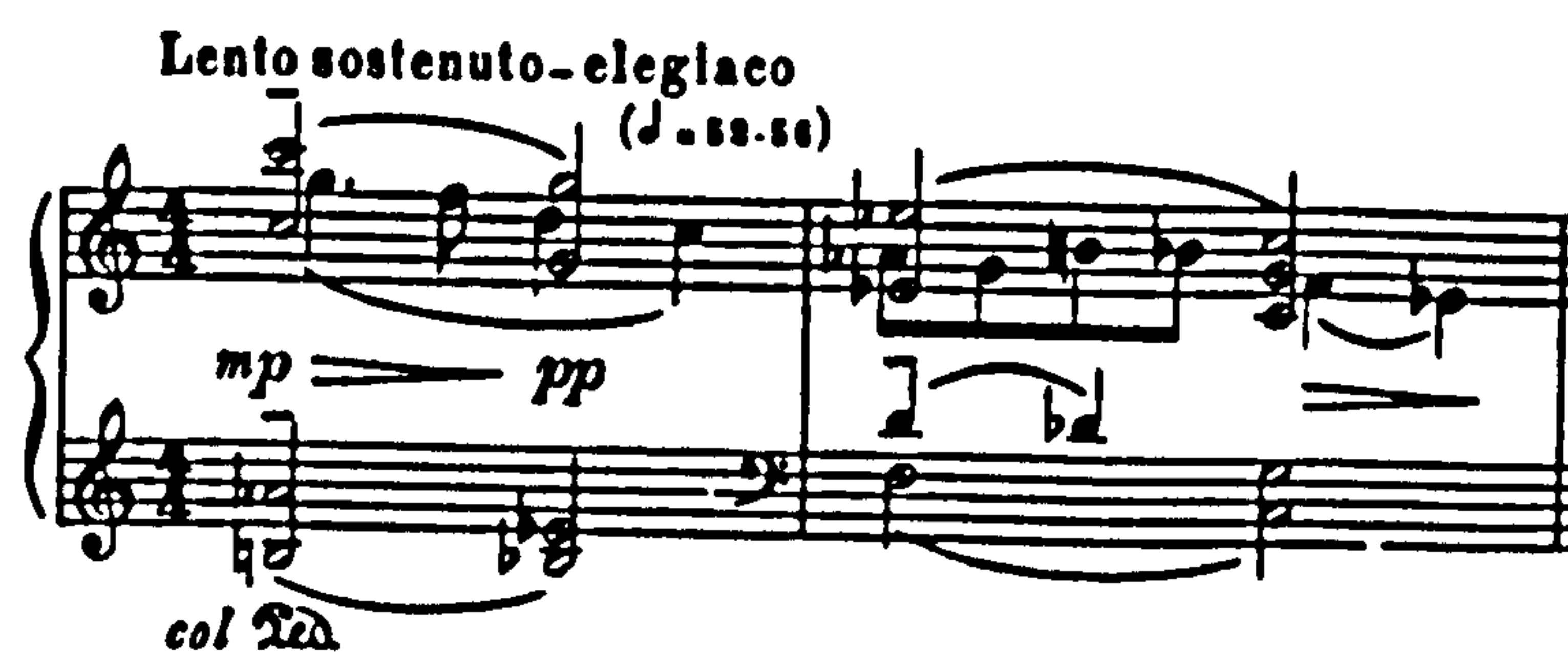
Ex. 3.41: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 1, bar 32



Ex. 3.42: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 1, bar 41



Ex. 3.43: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 2, bars 1 to 2



Within the traditional structures used by Leighton there is always an element of development and evolution in the restatement of themes as opposed to straight repetition. A theme is rarely heard in exactly the same way on more than one occasion. This technique



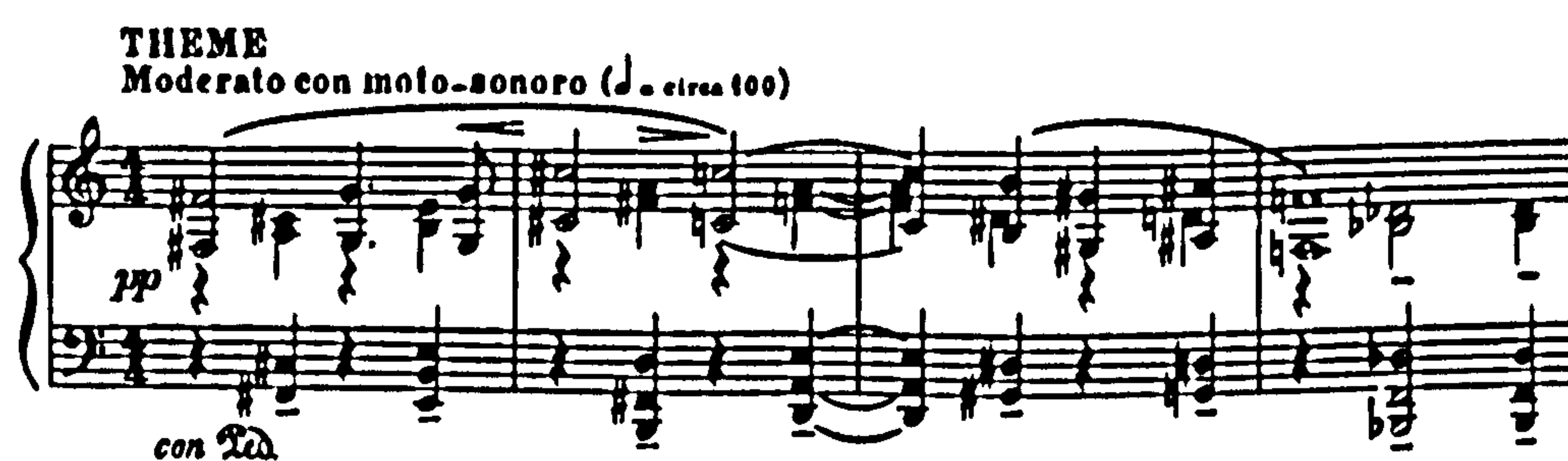
requires varied and rich harmonic palettes and abilities on Leighton's part as composer, with a developing rhythmic sophistication, encompassing a more involved complexity that is vivid in both piano works from this period. This requirement for increasing intricacy commonly includes a greater degree of development; increasingly this is through counterpoint, which includes independent melodic material beginning to pervade accompaniment textures. An increased progression is found in smaller sections outside the usual development sections, with individual subjects being put through significant expansion immediately following their introduction – as with the first subject of the first movement of the second piano sonata, developed from bar 18 onwards. Between the two pianos of *São Paulo*, which at times converse in an antiphonal manner (almost an antecedent of the also unpublished *Concerto for Two Pianos and String Orchestra* Opus 26 of 1954), the roles are often reversed with almost endless possibilities to be gained from the two instruments. The varying pitch of themes between the pianists provides most of the variation needed to achieve this while remaining musically economical and constantly fresh, in what is one of Leighton's most exuberant works of the year 1952.

The third movement of the second piano sonata, *Theme and Variations*, takes on the arch structure, with a gradual growth followed by decline. The use of a set of variations is a useful summing up of the techniques, textures, musical economy, nuances of the piano and structure that Leighton is employing and combining with increasing confidence at this point in his development. As has already been pointed out, the textures used in this movement are perhaps the largest used before by Leighton, the orchestral nature of them requiring more than two staves in five of the eight variations. This does not mean, however, that the

remaining three variations and the theme itself are of much lighter and thinner proportions, and this movement possibly presents some of the densest writing for piano to date. Some of the variations are linked, with one flowing directly into the next, while there is a brief pause between others; there is no particular consistency in this, a feature also to be found in other works.

The *Theme and Variations* begins simply with a chordal accompaniment to the wistful, yet dark and chromatic, theme (Ex. 3.44).

**Ex. 3.44:** *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17– movement 3 *Theme and Variations*, bars 1 to 2



The theme becomes gradually hidden with each variation growing in density, dynamics and textures, each following variation evolving to disguise the theme rhythmically and within the structure. The peak occurs at variation number five, followed by a considerable reduction in momentum. The first variation offers a glimpse of the opening of the first movement, as its chromatic opening two-chord figure becomes a slightly extended, oscillating chromatic figure, that follows the harmonic progression of the theme and pervades the movement (Ex. 3.45).



Ex. 3.45: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 3 *Theme and Variations*, bars 22 to 25



Variation number two sees the theme transported into the bass for the first time, with groups of triplet quavers in the right hand and chords on the second and fourth beats of the bar working to cover the theme. Variation number three has the theme in octaves in inversion above a repetitive chordal figure (Ex. 3.46), the texture changing with the gentle introduction of imitative contrapuntal lines at bar 78, working upwards from the bottom of the three parts (Ex. 3.47).

Ex. 3.46: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 3 *Theme and Variations*, bars 69 to 73

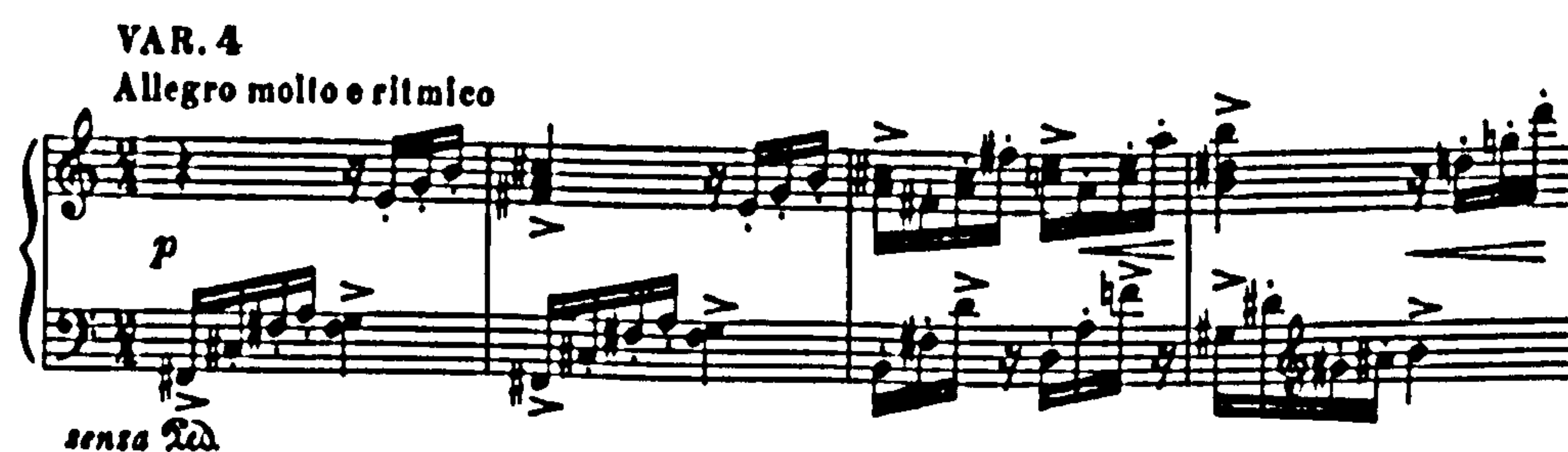


Ex. 3.47: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17 – movement 3 *Theme and Variations*, bars 78 to 82



Further changes of accompaniment at bars 84, 91 and 95, different each time, demonstrate a constant evolution of fresh ideas and lack of monotony within the structure. The virtuosic fourth variation sees the theme passed between the left and right hands amid a flurry of toccata-like semiquaver figures (Ex. 3.48), before the majestic and grand peak of the movement in variation number five. The distinct difference between the fifth and notably lighter sixth variations continues the plentiful number of contrasts that are heard regularly within the work, tension and resolution being formed of changes in texture, mood, dynamic and only one significant peak, as opposed to the more often used series of climaxes. The movement winds down towards the close, with a return full circle to the somewhat murky chordal nature of the opening and the original key of F sharp minor.

Ex. 3.48: *Sonata No. 2 for piano* Opus 17— movement 3 *Theme and Variations*, bars 100 to 103



The following review of the *Sonata No. 2* Opus 17 from *Music and Letters* makes these observations about the work:

In his second piano sonata, Kenneth Leighton makes a notable advance in his writing for the medium. Both style and harmony are decidedly taut, and without going to extremes the music is able to express succinctly and directly a considerable emotional power. The last movement is a fine theme and variations. One wonders whether the music should have been allowed to slip, however beautifully, back to the elegiac mood of the slow movement, whether a more vigorous and vehement end might not have carried more conviction. Even so the music is fine as it stands – and grateful to play.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Anon., Review of *Sonata No. 2 for Piano Op. 17*, (*Music and Letters*, January 1955).



Despite this review, the music does not particularly slip back into the mood of the slow movement, ending in a slightly darker frame of mind that is more akin to the sultry theme at the opening of the third movement. The reviewer appears to have missed the fact that the form of the movement as a whole appears to adopt the structure of the theme with a return to the opening towards the end – the middle section of the theme is a development section of sorts before a recapitulation, the exposition ending following the statement of a slightly extended note row. A much more relevant assessment was found in a review in *The Musical Times*, where Alec Rowley wrote of the work:

He now uses three staves instead of two which implies a greater range of technique and a wider use of the keyboard. Leighton is a good craftsman, and has a sensitive ear for effective spacing, but his music lacks colour and contrast. Since his previous Sonata and two Sonatinas, he has become deeper in musical thought, but lacks 'finger-prints'. Every composer of note has a style of his own either natural or created. I wish this composer of infinite promise would consider the matter of tonal contrast and colour; a lengthy work cannot afford monotony. The most successful movement is the last one, a strong and finely made Theme and Variations.<sup>40</sup>

Although this is a more relevant view of the work, the slight criticism of a lack of tonal contrast and colour is perhaps a little unfair in this particular work, which is one of Leighton's most varied and advanced so far in terms of this. Ivor Keys, also in *The Musical Times*, had earlier praised Leighton's 'lively sense of colour'<sup>41</sup> in reference to his writing for piano in the *Sonata No. 1* Opus 2 of 1948, but perhaps Rowley is referring to the rather different darker and wistful mood that is presented throughout this sonata, most noticeable in the *Theme and Variations*. The particular point about Leighton's music still being a little derivative, and lacking something of a personal style, however, is particularly pertinent at this point in his development. There are clear signs of advancement in this work regarding

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<sup>40</sup> Rowley, Alec, *New Music: Piano*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 95, No. 1342, December 1954).

<sup>41</sup> Keys, Ivor, *Piano Music*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 31, No. 4, October 1950), 372.

an individual musical language, but it is by no means the most recognisable of Leighton's works from this period, following his return from Rome, until the final movement is reached. The lyrical and structural strengths are the most recognisable features in the remainder of the work, the harmonic style still owing much to a late-Romantic idiom.

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Jumping ahead a little, in April 1957, an article devoted entirely to Leighton's career up to that point appeared in *The Musical Times*. John Cockshoot gives a useful insight into his early career and the high esteem in which he was beginning to be held. It begins with the bold statement:

New composers continue to bud in profusion. Out of the scores of fresh names, that of Kenneth Leighton is assuming an importance that many have noted and none should disregard.<sup>42</sup>

The article goes on to discuss the various influences on Leighton's music, citing the obvious early influences on him while at Oxford in the form of Vaughan Williams, Rubbra and Walton, but also mentions a possibly subconscious influence of Lennox Berkeley and Hindemith.<sup>43</sup> He goes on to say how the 'release from Oxford was electric'<sup>44</sup> and that when in Rome:

[...] Leighton began a prolonged study of the works of Bartók, Hindemith, Berg and Dallapiccola. The natural outcome of this was bound to be a much more highly chromatic style than formerly, with essays in a serial technique and a general absence of conventional tonality. But at heart Leighton is still a romantic, so that his studies have

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<sup>42</sup> Cockshoot, John, *The Music of Kenneth Leighton*, (*The Musical Times*, Vol. 98, No. 1370, April 1957), 193.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



not encouraged him to write mere abstractions. His works since 1951 show that he still has a use for tonality.<sup>45</sup>

A little later on the article sums up an important feature that is particularly noticeable in the lack of a key signature in the majority of his works and the intensely chromatic idiom of his emerging musical language: 'It is the long stretches of vague or non-existent tonality, however, which characterize much of Leighton's instrumental works since 1951, and demonstrate most clearly the trends of his musical thought'. The absorption of chromatic writing and serialist techniques into his own determinedly tonal and romantic style is confirmed in a letter that Leighton wrote to *The Musical Times* concerning the influence of foreign and modern music:

[...] one can hardly say that twelve-note technique is alien to the Italian nature. Nor can I see any reason why English composers should not also (at this stage in the development of our music) adopt elements of the technique, without risk of destroying their fundamental Englishness.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Imitation or Influence*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 96, No. 1347, May 1955).

## Chapter Four

### Leeds, 1953-1956

Leighton's appointment as Gregory Fellow in Composition at the University of Leeds in the autumn of 1953 represented another significant point in his composing career. Relieved of any teaching duties in this new post, he was free to concentrate on expanding his already considerable portfolio of compositions. Incidentally, Leighton was the first Gregory Fellow to be appointed in the field of music, the post previously having been awarded only to other areas of the arts, including poetry and art. Leighton's abilities at combining and assimilating the various influences upon him were central to the development of his own musical fingerprints; vital possibilities were now open to him to develop a technique in which his music was not so readily seen as derivative of other composers.

A 1957 article in *The Musical Times* on Leighton's music up until that point by John Cockshoot closes with a vital insight into Leighton's opinions on serial influences in music:

[...] his attitude to serialism is important. He believes that the twelve-note technique is the most significant feature of modern style, but is more interested in the serialism of Berg and Dallapiccola than that of Schoenberg. Leighton does not see it, however, as the ultimate goal of everything, or as necessarily the highest manifestation of modern style. He regards it as being only one characteristic part (the *most* characteristic part) of a much wider manifestation of a modern style, in which the *intervallic* nature of musical material has achieved a new kind of importance. This is a free chromatic technique (which may or may not have tonal implications) in which an intervallic pattern is closely adhered to, and provides the main logic and impetus in place of the old feeling of chord progression. Tonality he believes to be essential, but a wider concept of tonality than we have hitherto known. It is in the reconciliation of free chromaticism (or serialism) with the forms of the past, that the most fruitful possibilities seem to lie.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cockshoot, John, *The Music of Kenneth Leighton*, (*The Musical Times*, vol. 98, No. 1370, April 1957), 196.



Once more there is a limited amount of information on the time Leighton spent in Leeds, although it was to prove a profitable and an eventful time, with a number of important commissions and publications. This period also included the birth of his first child, Angela in 1954.

Josephine Leighton has written that '[...] it is to Lydia's credit that Kenneth took the Leeds Fellowship, turning down a school job ([I] don't know where) that he had already accepted after Deal.'<sup>2</sup> At that time, the number of staff in the music department at the University of Leeds was small, with just four members – James Denny (professor), Edward Allain (senior lecturer), Frank Mumby (lecturer) and James Brown (lecturer).<sup>3</sup> In the year 2000, James Brown wrote some detailed reminiscences of Leeds University in the 1950s and Leighton's time there:

As I recall, the purpose of the Gregory Fellowship was to give the recipients 3 years to devote single-mindedly to their creative work, with no extra responsibilities, apart from allowing University life to be enriched by the presentation of such work when completed. (The other two recipients alongside Kenneth at that time I think were James Kirkup [poetry], and Reg Butler [sculpture]). In the case of Kenneth, obviously various works featured in University concerts.<sup>4</sup>

The music scene at Leeds at this point was limited, as Brown details in a subsequent letter:

The University was a much smaller affair in those days & the amount they were willing to spend on musical events [was] much smaller too. I think there were 4 professional evening concerts per year, & a few professional artists came to give lunch-time recitals. We residents (staff and students) contributed to this latter series, & there was usually one domestic choral concert in each of the first 2 terms of the academic year.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Leighton, Josephine, correspondence with Adam Binks (20 May 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Brown, James, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (4 July 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, James, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (15 July 2000).



In the first letter, Brown states that Leighton lived outside Leeds, and probably somewhere towards Harrogate.<sup>6</sup> Brown also gives some brief details of performances by Leighton during this period:

I remember two occasions. The first time I actually saw & heard him was probably shortly after he arrived, when he gave an electrifying performance of his 5 Piano Studies. Later on the Piano Quintet was featured [...] with Kenneth as pianist, & made a big impression.<sup>7</sup>

According to Leighton himself he did in fact get restless with nothing more to do but compose, stating in 1979 that:

When I had a Fellowship in Leeds to do nothing but compose, I became very unhappy because I felt I was somehow a misfit. I didn't feel I belonged to society, but was almost a parasite.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4.1:** Compositions from August 1953 to December 1954

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Aug. – Sept. 1953	<i>A Christmas Caroll</i>	solo Bar, SATB, str, pf	21
Aug. – Oct. 1953	<i>Five Studies for Piano</i>	pf	22
Oct. – Dec. 1953	<i>Concerto for Oboe and Strings</i>	ob, str	23
Dec. 1953	<i>Winter Scenes</i>	pf	-
Feb. – March 1954	Incidental music to <i>The Knight of the Burning Pestle</i>	2 fl, hn, str	-
Nov. 1953 – June 1954	<i>Symphony for Full Orchestra</i>	Full orch.	-
June – Sept. 1954	<i>Concerto for Two Pianos, Timpani and Strings</i>	2pf, timp, str	26
July – Oct. 1954	<i>Sonata No. 3 for Piano</i>	pf	27
Sept. – Dec. 1954	<i>The Birds</i>	Solo S, SATB, 2pf, clsta, cym, timp	28

<sup>6</sup> Brown, James, correspondence with Mrs. Josephine Leighton (4 July 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Dreyer, Martin, *Yorkshire Composers 6: Kenneth Leighton*, (November in Yorkshire, Yorkshire Arts Association, 1979).



Following the move to Leeds an initial reduction in writing music for (or including) the piano resulted in Leighton's first published choral work, *A Christmas Carol*. The piece does, however, involve another keyboard instrument, with the organ making a significant appearance. This was his first attempt at writing for the organ in any capacity, but particularly as an accompaniment to a four part mixed choir and baritone solo.

The general choral writing in *A Christmas Carol* is particularly accessible and would have appealed to every level of musician, without being either too simplistic or advanced. This subtle sophistication and yet natural and approachable quality within his choral writing was remarked upon by one of Leighton's mentors, Gerald Finzi. Little of Leighton's correspondence with Finzi is extant, but *A Christmas Carol* is referred to in the following letter from December 1954, although he is likely referring to the slightly later version for strings, piano and chorus from March 1954, as well as the original:

Dear Kenneth,

I was glad to have the 'Christmas Carroll'. Actually I have already seen it & given my copy to the conductor of a local choral group, in the hope that we c[oul]d one day do it with our strings. So it's good to have another copy for myself.

I don't think there are any comments I c[oul]d make on the choral writing. The whole thing comes very naturally to you. Choirs w[oul]d like singing it, because – quite apart from the actual content – everything is so happily "placed".

No doubt theory-ridden creatures will tell you that it ought to be 12 tone, or that you mightn't [sic] to use melisma or that you ought to use nothing but melisma, or that there's not enough 14<sup>th</sup> century style about it etc, etc. But your capacity for writing rather as the birds (about which you are writing) sing, is worth all the theories put together.

[...] I hope Lydia is not overwhelmed by the beastly weather, probably even worse in Leeds than here. Our warm greetings to you both.

Gerald.<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to read Finzi's views on modern methods of composition and in time it is equally interesting to observe how Leighton absorbs this opinion, while not necessarily adopting it wholly. His subsequent views on the subject (reflected in his composing and confirmed in the above article by Cockshoot) demonstrate how he shares Finzi's clear opinion of not writing to the order of theories or current trends, and it is interesting how this manifests itself through his stylistic development.

Written between August and October of 1953 the *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 were not performed until 7 March 1957 by Eric Parkin in the Wigmore Hall, London. *The Times* reported on this first performance:

His programme was still more interesting for the first performance of the Five Studies, Op. 22, by Kenneth Leighton; they are all contrasted in subject-matter, but all splendidly pianistic. Their considerable technical demands were effortlessly met by Mr. Parkin [...]<sup>10</sup>

The *Five Studies* were programmed alongside Beethoven's *Sonata in F sharp major* Opus 78 and Busoni's arrangement of Bach's *Chaconne*. They represent some of the most individual and varied material and techniques of his piano writing up to this point in his career – they are essentially exercises in advanced piano technique and dexterity. Leighton's virtuosic writing reaches new levels in these succinct pieces, the longest of which is only 110 bars.

On their publication in 1957, well-known music journalist Peter Pirie wrote of the *Five Studies* in *Music and Letters*:

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<sup>9</sup> Finzi, Gerald, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton (13 December 1954).

<sup>10</sup> Anon., *Mr Eric Parkin*, (*The Times*, 11 March 1957).



Of the making of studies there is no end, but Kenneth Leighton's set of five are more worthy of a permanent place in the repertory than most. Difficult and brilliant, they are fairly original, and not the usual rehash of Chopin. He who can play the lovely filigree-work of No. 4 with the requisite accuracy and beautiful tone may congratulate himself.<sup>11</sup>

This substantial progression seen in Leighton's individual compositional style so far continued in the *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23. Written between October and December of 1953, it returns to the scoring of just strings that is found in most of Leighton's earlier orchestral works. Despite what we are told in the letter below from Finzi, this particular work remained unperformed in public during Leighton's lifetime; Finzi's son Christopher has confirmed that he took part in an initial play through of this work although it was not performed by them at any other time.<sup>12</sup> It was first performed (and subsequently published by the firm of Maecenas) in 2000, by Ginny Shaw and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul Daniel on 23 August as part of the Millennium Three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral. Finzi wrote to Leighton about the concerto:

Dear Kenneth,

The oboe concerto is safely here and I've had a quick run-through. There doesn't seem to be anything the strings c[oul]dn't tackle, although it's a bit more difficult than the earlier works from the point of view of intonation & the idiom is perhaps a bit harder for the sort of audience we get. However, that doesn't matter. It might be a good idea to have the string parts duplicated now & let me have a set so that I c[oul]d begin to get the players used to the work, even though it's so far ahead. If you haven't another suggestion I'll write to James Brown and see if he'll be back from Holland by April 24<sup>th</sup>. Someone told me that Tony Danby had improved enormously, so I w[oul]dn't mind asking him if you preferred it. But Brown is first rate.

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<sup>11</sup> Pirie, Peter, *Reviews of Music, Leighton, Kenneth, Five Studies for Piano*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 38, No. 3, July 1957).

<sup>12</sup> Finzi, Christopher, correspondence with Adam Binks (12 June 2006).

We could leave the final decision as to whether to do the harp/viola work [Opus 15], or this one, until later. I sh[oul]d certainly like to see it when you get the score back from Harvey Phillips.<sup>13</sup>

Despite this reference by Gerald Finzi to the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Strings and Timpani*, Christopher Finzi does not recall the Newbury String Players ever attempting the work.<sup>14</sup>

In further correspondence, Finzi details that the BBC was interested in performing the oboe concerto in an 'experimental rehearsal',<sup>15</sup> and that regular rehearsals for this work had been taking place with the Newbury String Players:

I only hope that the BBC won't ask for the material of the oboe concerto before Sept[ember] 25<sup>th</sup>. The position is this. We had our last concert of the season last Sunday week & then closed down until Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>. I asked everyone to hand in all music except yours! We have been working on it for half an hour or so every week & have broken the back (oh, these colloquial expressions: I wonder how you will explain that to Lydia!) of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> movements.<sup>16</sup>

It wasn't until as late as September 1955 that Finzi finally admitted defeat in terms of the oboe concerto:

The oboe concerto looks like being a bit too tough for amateurs to tackle. We've brought it out several times & had a go at it, & even had an oboist down, but I think it's beyond them. If I had a picked body there w[oul]d be no difficulty; & it's lovely for the soloist.<sup>17</sup>

Much of Leighton's work from the year 1954 is little, or not at all, known. The first work listed in the composition book for this year is *Music to "The Knight of the Burning Pestle"* for a

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<sup>13</sup> Finzi, Gerald, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton (8 January 1954).

<sup>14</sup> Finzi, Christopher, correspondence with Adam Binks (12 June 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Finzi, Gerald, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton (3 August 1954). The BBC orchestra regularly had experimental rehearsals that provided composers with a valuable opportunity to hear their work performed. It is not known if the oboe concerto was performed in one of these rehearsals. The *Symphony* composed in 1954 that Leighton subsequently withdrew definitely received a performance at one of these rehearsals.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Finzi, Gerald, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton (29 September 1955).



University of Leeds production composed between February and March. The second entry is the arrangement for piano and strings of *A Christmas Carol* that was made in March. The third entry details what could have been a major work, which was subsequently discarded – completed in June, having been begun the previous year, it is simply entitled *Symphony*. The manuscript of this work still exists, although the corrections that Leighton made on it before discarding are extensive and a clear picture of the work is difficult to obtain. The remaining three are again all major works: *Concerto for Two Pianos, Timpani and String Orchestra* Opus 26, written between June and September; *Sonata No.3 for Piano* Opus 27, written between July and October; and *The Birds* Opus 28 written between September and December. From a particularly substantial list, only the small *A Christmas Carol* and the much more substantial *The Birds* made it into publication, the latter work gaining him much recognition, receiving the Award of the National Federation of Music Societies.

Split into eight movements, *The Birds* Opus 28 appears in two different instrumental arrangements – the original scoring is for soprano solo, chorus, two pianos, celesta, suspended cymbal and timpani (the percussion being *ad lib.*), and the later scoring is for soprano solo, chorus piano, strings and the same *ad lib.* percussion. The version with the original scoring was written between September and December of 1954, and the second version, similar to the second version of *A Christmas Carol*, was made at the request of Novello before its publication a year later in December 1955. The removal of celesta and one piano to be replaced by strings detracts somewhat from the innovative results that Leighton achieved in the original scoring, although on the printed vocal score published by Novello it is the version for strings and piano that is the only recommended version. The simpler scoring could have been seen as a safer option for the work, the logistical

implications of three keyboard instruments perhaps being seen as something of a deterrent to performers. The percussion parts for this work (just timpani and suspended cymbal) are used sparingly and seemingly only for effect at the fuller climax points of the work, and the score could easily cope without their brief and infrequent appearances. *The Birds* was first performed as late as 24 April 1960, with soprano April Cantelo, the Great Yarmouth Musical Society and the Capriol Orchestra being conducted by Leighton himself.

The poetic material used for the sung texts in *The Birds* allows for a wide range of moods, effects and textures. The layout of the work is such that the outer two movements and the central movement use general texts regarding birds, and the movements between use texts about specific named birds. Aristophanes is the only poet whose text is used in more than one movement, out of a quite varied list that includes Thomas Hardy (*The Robin*), Thomas Vautor (*Sweet Suffolk Owle*), Percy Bysshe Shelley (*Elegy*), Walter de la Mare (*The Linnet*) and Alfred Lord Tennyson (*The Eagle*). The two movements of Aristophanes (which are translated from the original Greek into English) are *Invocation* and *The Hymn of the Birds*. The remaining movement *The Blackbird* is by an anonymous poet. The score is prefaced by a quote from John Collings Squire that reads 'Whatever alters else on sea or shore, These are unchanging; man must still explore'.

*The Birds* was given the following rapturous write-up in *Music and Letters*:

Kenneth Leighton has already an impressive list of compositions to his credit, and this, his latest choral work to be published, shows a fine mastery of the choral idiom. There are eight sections, of which No. 2 'The Robin', and No. 6, 'The Linnet' for unaccompanied S.A.T.B., will be useful material as partsongs for choral societies unable to afford a soloist and a string orchestra. In the opening 'Invocation' and the closing section, 'The Hymn of the Birds', both translations from Aristophanes, the soloist has a



fine florid line, and throughout the work the choral writing, though difficult technically, is admirably matched to the words.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 4.2:** Compositions from September 1954 to December 1955

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Jan. 1955	Incidental Music for <i>Othello</i>	fl, 2 vln, vla, rec trio	-
Jan. – April 1955	<i>Fantasia on the Name BACH</i>	vla, pf	29
March – May 1955	<i>Variations for Piano</i>	pf	30
July 1955	Incidental music for <i>The Persian War</i>	brass, str, hp, perc	-
Dec. 1955	Rescoring of <i>The Birds</i>	Solo S, SATB, pf, str	28

The year 1955 was an important year of composition. Now thoroughly settled as Gregory Fellow at the University of Leeds, Leighton's rapid development as a result of concentrated compositional work was beginning to bear fruit further in terms of development and productivity. The year began with incidental music for a University of Leeds production of *Othello* scored for flute quintet and recorder trio, other works written in the first half of the year being devoted to music that included the piano (*Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 and *Variations for Piano* Opus 30). 1955 was also to see his first commission from the BBC in the form of incidental music for a radio play entitled *The Persian War* that was composed in July. Apart from the rescoring of *The Birds* for Novello, Leighton's composing activities in the remainder of 1955 were to be focused on two important works that were both completed early in 1956, *Fantasia Contrappuntistica for Piano (Homage to Bach)* Opus 24 begun in June and the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 begun in September.

<sup>18</sup> R. T., *Reviews of Music: Leighton, Kenneth, The Birds*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 39, No. 3, July 1958).



The *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* is a fairly substantial work in one movement, but split into four sections. Written between January and April of 1955, it is dedicated to Watson Forbes, who gave the first performance at a Society for the Promotion of New Music (SPNM) concert at the Arts Council in London on 6 July 1956. The *Fantasia* also won the Harry Danks Prize for a new work for viola in 1955.<sup>19</sup>

The *Variations for Piano* were written between March and May of 1955 and were first performed on 24 October of the same year at the Arts Council of Great Britain in London by Leighton himself. It represents a landmark, being the first of his works heavily influenced by serial techniques – a note-row, on which it is based, is quoted at the top of the score, although the serial origins of this composition are not instantly apparent and the bounds of tonality are still present. Separated into nine sections, each variation is allotted a name: *Introduzione*, *Canzonetta*, *Ninna-Nanna*, *Toccata*, *Notturmo*, *Valzer*, *Fanfara*, *Interludio* and *Fuga*. The predominant interval in the note-row is that of the fourth, giving certain melodic, tonal shape and direction to the note-row in favour of a more random selection.

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<sup>19</sup> Harry Danks (1912-2001) was for some time the principal violist in the BBC Symphony Orchestra.



**Table 4.3:** Compositions from September 1955 to July 1956

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Sept. 1955 – March 1956	<i>Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra</i>	vc, full orch.	31
Jan. 1956	<i>Three Carols</i>	solo S, SATB	25 (a, b & c)
June 1955 – Jan. 1956	<i>Fantasia Contrappuntistica (Homage to Bach)</i>	pf	24
April 1956	Incidental Music to <i>The Ivory Tower</i>	brass, str, hp, perc	-
Jan. – July 1956	<i>String Quartet No. 1</i>	2 vln, vla, vc	32

The year 1956 was an extremely important year for Leighton. Alongside the completion of a number of important and defining works, he was to begin his long association with the Faculty of Music at the University of Edinburgh, being initially appointed a lecturer in counterpoint at the conclusion of his Gregory Fellowship at the beginning of the academic year 1956 to 1957. The variety of Leighton's compositions in this year is clearly evident – apart from completing the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* and the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra*, he completed a set of three carols for unaccompanied SATB choir and soprano solo (containing the well-known *Lully, lulla thou little tiny child* discussed in Chapter Two) and received two more commissions from the BBC. The first of these was to provide incidental music to another radio play (*The Ivory Tower*) and the second and more significant commission for a string quartet to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Third Programme. The majority of Leighton's works from this point in his career onwards are published, and Novello were to publish the majority of these.

The *Three Carols* Opus 25, were completed in January of 1956. They consist of *The Star-song* (Opus 25a), *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* (Opus 25b) and *An ode of the birth of our Saviour*



(Opus 25c). *Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child* was taken from the earlier student set of three carols from December 1948, while the other two were completely new works. They are all scored for soprano solo and unaccompanied SATB choir; Leighton was also to write three more carols for this particular scoring (*Nativitie* in 1956, *A Hymn of the Nativity* in 1960, and *Of a rose is all my song* in 1970), as well as an arrangement of the Gloucestershire wassail, *Wassail all over the town* in 1962. *The Star-song* and *An ode on the birth of our Saviour*, both use texts by Robert Herrick, and *Lully, lulla thou little tiny child* uses the much earlier fifteenth-century text from the *Pageant of the Shearman and Tailors of Coventry*.

Completed around the same time as the *Three Carols*, *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* represented another prize-winning composition for Leighton, winning the Busoni Prize in 1956. Held in Bolzano, the annual Busoni competition is a prestigious opportunity for both pianists and composers for the piano to compete. As part of the prize, the *Fantasia* was to be given its premiere in Bolzano, Italy, as well as being published by the Italian firm of Ricordi, based in Milan. According to the history of the competition the following events occurred:

In 1956, when Jörg Demus won the Premio Busoni, the composition contest was won by the Englishman Kenneth Leighton (winner of the 2nd prize: Bruno Bettinelli). Maurizio Pollini, who was barely fourteen at the time, took Giorgio Vidusso's place at the last minute and his performance of the difficult pieces selected by the jury was highly impressive. Pollini not only had no difficulty, he actually played some of the compositions from memory.<sup>20</sup>

*Fantasia Contrappuntistica* was one of the first of the few works that Leighton wrote about in the form of programme notes. These programme notes provide a useful insight into the work, although Leighton didn't generally write at any length on his own music and was

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<sup>20</sup> Anon., *International Piano Competition 'Ferruccio Busoni': The Beginning of the Competition* ([www.concorsobusoni.it](http://www.concorsobusoni.it)).



reluctant to do so when asked. There are two very different programme notes for *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, and the first, from an early performance of the work, provides a helpful view into the thought process behind his composing at the time, and the second is more concerned with a general view of the piece:

Modern counterpoint derives its logic from the intervallic nature of its material, and not from the sense of harmonic progression implied by the part-writing. In some respects therefore it is closer to the modal counterpoint of the sixteenth century than to the Baroque or Classical polyphony. For long stretches, the tonality may be only vague or non-existent; and the cohesion previously provided by tonality is achieved by the closest possible adherence to the intervallic characteristics of the basic material. The most typical manifestation of this tendency is of course the technique known as "twelve-note", where the intervals of a single series of twelve notes (all different) are strictly adhered to through a whole movement or work. But it is important to note that this system (employed in varying degrees of strictness by an ever-increasing number of composers) is only one characteristic part of a more general tendency in 20<sup>th</sup> century counterpoint – i.e., towards a free chromatic technique in which an intervallic pattern provides the main basis of the music, while at the same time tonal elements are not excluded.

In the present work (written in 1955) the basic material consists of a perfect fourth followed by an augmented fourth. The only other material which it is necessary to keep in mind is the chorale tune of the middle section, which returns in the final fugue. The form is simple. A slow introduction presents the idea in its simplest form; a quick toccata follows, exploiting its vertical possibilities; contrast is provided by the slow chorale, which retains however the initial material in its counterpoint. Two fugues make up the final section.<sup>21</sup>

It is interesting to note in the above passage how Leighton seems determined not to abandon totally the principles of tonality, viewing serial techniques as an enhancement of the possibilities and limits of tonal boundaries – a trait clearly evident in the *Variations for Piano*. It is also essential to observe that despite this work paying homage to Bach and Busoni, the counterpoint element of the work is viewed by Leighton to be derived more from renaissance polyphony, rather than that of the Baroque – a vital insight into

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<sup>21</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, (concert programme note, Reid Concert Hall, University of Edinburgh, 8 November 1956).

Leighton's influences, although the influence of Bach is certainly present. The second of Leighton's programme notes reads as follows:

This work was composed in 1955 and won first prize in the Busoni Competition (1956) for a new piano work in Bolzano, Italy. The first performance was given by Maurizio Pollini.

Subtitled 'Homage to Bach', the piece also pays homage to Busoni in its contrapuntal texture and particularly in the central 'chorall' [sic] section; but in general structure it is far removed from Busoni and more related to Bartok [sic].

The opening slow and rhetorical section presents the 'germ' of the piece and this persists throughout. After a fairly lengthy discussion of the opening statement the music launches into a fiery and impassioned Toccata. Toccata-style gives way to fantasy and eventually to the central 'chorale-prelude' where a second melody is superimposed on the opening theme. The religious overtones are here evident, I hope.

The final section consists of two fugues on the same theme. The first is slow, ruminative and expressive, the second brilliant and virtuosic. All this culminates in a return of the opening rhetoric and a final challenging phrase in the depths of the piano.<sup>22</sup>

As Leighton was working on *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, he was also composing the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31, which was one of his largest and most ambitious works up to this point, and took a whole seven months to complete. It was to gain him further recognition as an emerging young composer of importance, being first performed at the Cheltenham Festival in the year of its completion with Florence Hooton as the soloist and Sir John Barbirolli conducting the Hallé orchestra, just a year after Finzi's own cello concerto was premièred at the same festival. Leighton wrote one of his most substantial programme notes for this particular work:

Begun early in 1955, this work was completed in the spring of the following year and the first performance was given at the Cheltenham Festival of 1956, by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli, with Florence Hooton as a soloist. Subsequent performances include those by Gendron at the Leeds Festival, a Prom performance

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<sup>22</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* Op. 24, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).



and performances on the continent. More recently the work was played by Joan Dickson and the Reid Orchestra under Sidney Newman at Edinburgh.<sup>23</sup>

The *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* is scored for a fairly conventional full orchestra, and is in three movements; the usual fast-slow-fast, three-movement arrangement is not a feature of this particular work, which has a fast-fast-slow arrangement. This concerto shows a continuing increase in the individuality of Leighton's musical language, and actually breaks away from some of the expected traits of his most recent works. It is not as dependent on recurring rhythmic and melodic fragments such as the opening five-note theme of the first piano concerto that made it into most of his subsequent works to this point. While he retains a formal structure within his music, it has become much more flexible and less relied upon, with Leighton now demonstrating a full confidence in his ability to write extensive works while sustaining the interest of the listener. He wrote a second and more substantial note for a performance of this work at the Leeds Centenary Music Festival in October 1958:

The 'cello is first and foremost a LYRICAL instrument, and, although capable of considerable brilliance, it tends to lose its dignity in the sort of virtuoso passagework that comes off so well on the violin. It is not surprising therefore that most 'cello concertos exploit above all the lyrical possibilities of the instrument; and the present work is no exception in this respect. On the other hand to speak of any conscious or premeditated aim of this kind on the part of the composer might be to misinterpret the true nature of creative thought.<sup>24</sup>

In this note, Leighton appears to confirm a substantial element of spontaneity in the composition of this work, which often leads to an improvisatory quality within his music –

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<sup>23</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra Opus 31*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

<sup>24</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra Opus 31*, (Leeds Centenary Music Festival Programme, 17 October 1958).

in particular for soloists. There is no doubt also that there is a great deal of passion and anguish, present from the opening bars of the work.

Despite a number of performances of the concerto, initially it was not entirely well received by some, as the following review of the first performance at the Cheltenham Festival suggests:

The most conservative in idiom of the new works [...] was Kenneth Leighton's cello concerto [...] His concerto is ambitious but its melodies do not lie naturally for the cello and the soloist has a difficult time in the long first movement to assert her tone against the orchestra's full employment. The Waltonian scherzo is the best movement thematically and in its treatment of the solo instrument. The slow movement is placed last, a risky procedure if one has not the commanding melodic power of an Elgar or a Dvořák; and despite much splendid music Leighton failed for this reason, I thought to bring down the curtain effectively.<sup>25</sup>

While not being an entirely bad review, it received a contrasting more rapturous reception the following year when it was presented in Edinburgh a year later with the Reid Orchestra in the University of Edinburgh with the same soloist:

First introduced at the 1956 Cheltenham Festival and recently performed during the London "Proms," it is an arresting and rather beautiful work. Its lyricism is of the dark-hued astringent kind, expressive but not cloying [...] The movements are clearly contrasted and their interior design, thanks to themes of distinctive character, easily assimilated.<sup>26</sup>

While Leighton was finishing both the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* and the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra*, he began work on his latest commission from the BBC, the *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32. The work received its first performance in a broadcast on 3 October

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<sup>25</sup> Kennedy, Michael, *Cheltenham Festival, 1956*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 97, No. 1363, September 1956), 485.

<sup>26</sup> Grier, Christopher, *Melody on a Cello: Reid Orchestra Concert*, (The Scotsman, 1 November 1957).



1956 on the BBC's Third Programme by the Aeolian Quartet. A subsequent performance of this work was well received:

Its many virtues [...] include clarity of structure, economical fluency of utterance, and a feeling for string textures, without being in any way outré [...] Thematic unity is implied through the manipulation of a chromatic motto figure, sufficiently flexible for it to adopt a variety of shapes and lengths and yet with enough character of its own for its basic identity not to be erased from the memory. This is a principle which in modern quartet music has been formulated with pre-eminent authority by Bartok [*sic*], and Mr Leighton's quartet, like many others of our time is not ignorant of Bartokian precepts. It is, moreover, consistently couched in the contemporary Central European musical language, and with a harmonic vocabulary of dissonant tanginess that manages to avoid acidity.<sup>27</sup>

However, an enormously different review of the quartet links the influence behind the work with Walton, rather than Bartók, claiming that it is let down and 'marred by too many unassimilated traces',<sup>28</sup> particularly the use of the C – D – E flat motif that recurs throughout the work (see Ex. 4.1).

Ex. 4.1: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 1 to 7

The image shows a musical score for a string quartet. It consists of four staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Com moto (♩ = circa 104)' and 'Tranquillo ma espressivo'. The Viola part has markings 'molto espress. e cantabile' and 'mp'. The score shows the first seven bars of the movement.

### Chamber and Instrumental Music

From Leighton's time at the University of Leeds, there are only two works that fall into the category of chamber and instrumental music, the *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and*

<sup>27</sup> Grier, Christopher, *Leighton Quartet: Performance by the Aeolian*, (The Scotsman, 6 March 1959).

<sup>28</sup> Crump, Peter N., *Reviews of Music*, (Music and Letters, Vol. 40, No. 2, April 1959), 201.

*Piano* Opus 29 and the *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32. Both works, however, represent a significant contribution to this genre within Leighton's output to this point. In his first year as Gregory Fellow, there are no works that feature in this category, and the *Fantasia* and the *String Quartet No. 1* were written in the first half of 1955 and 1956 respectively.

The *Fantasia on the name BACH* does not represent the first work with this scoring of viola and piano, following the withdrawn three-movement viola sonata of 1949. The *Fantasia* essentially has the proportions of a sonata, but is in one movement, split into four distinct sections that each flow into the next in a continuous and more malleable manner. In this way it is similar in structure to the earlier *São Paulo: Toccata Brasileira for Two Pianos* discussed in the previous chapter. In keeping with traditional works entitled fantasia, a fixed form and structure is not so important within this work, overall leaving the impression of a protracted and extensive set of variations on the BACH theme. It is one of the first of Leighton's chamber works to contain the bold and individual confidence of his more recognised style, Leighton beginning to speak with his own musical voice.

As a response to a commission from the BBC, the string quartet signals an increasing number of compositions within Leighton's output, the scoring of which was not necessarily determined by the composer – a feature of many of his subsequent works. While this may be the case, it is not inconceivable, having already written two string quartets of his own volition (in 1948 and 1951), that he did intend to write more works in this notoriously difficult genre. By this point the works in Leighton's growing catalogue that contained string instruments within the scoring were numerous. However, even with considerable



practice at string techniques and string quartet writing, the exposed qualities of the medium require different procedures than those needed for a large body of strings.

Perhaps most importantly within Leighton's works at this time, the string quartet represents a more advanced use of complex contrapuntal textures over the *Fantasia*. The contrapuntal part-writing, which is clearly visible from the opening bars of the quartet, is a feature throughout much of the work; it can be seen to build from the rich lower textures of the string instruments – a feature reminiscent of the opening of Leighton's earlier works for strings (Ex. 4.1 & 4.2).

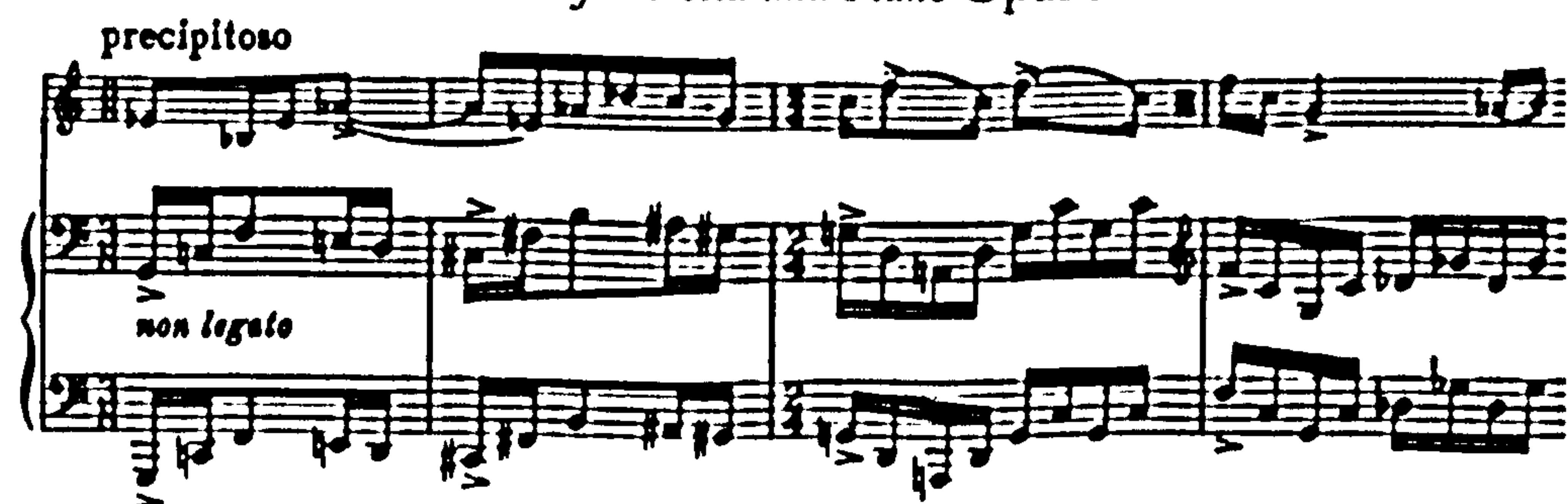
Ex. 4.2: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 8 to 22

One of Leighton's colleagues at the Faculty of Music at the University of Edinburgh, Edward Harper, lends a little insight into the composition of this work, saying: 'Another respect in which this medium could be said to be well suited to this composer is how well it lends itself to contrapuntal treatment of material, with all four instruments able to express

their individual lines on absolutely equal terms'.<sup>29</sup> There are ample occasions for each line to dominate the texture of the quartet as well as serving as part of an accompaniment texture at appropriate times, supplying an extra level of textural variation to Leighton's already expansive abilities. Within his music so far, most new themes are heard as part of a continuing technique of changing textures, however, in the four parts of the quartet, each instrumental part complements the next in a separate but collectively coherent manner at a consistent level not heard before in Leighton's writing.

Along with the quartet the *Fantasia* also symbolises the beginning of both extended and dense use of counterpoint in its most manifest and concentrated manner within Leighton's music. The enormous tribute paid to Bach within the *Fantasia* is extremely appropriate in that sense, his music being a considerable influence upon Leighton's use of counterpoint, and particularly in his employment of fugue – incidentally this work contains Leighton's first published fugue. Both the *Fantasia* and the *String Quartet No. 1* prove to be excellent vehicles for the use of counterpoint, ranging from two parts to the more complex elements of Leighton's increasing use of contrapuntal techniques found, for example, from bar 241 of the *Fantasia* and bar 87 of the first movement of the string quartet (Ex. 4.3 and 4.4).

Ex. 4.3: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 241 to 244



<sup>29</sup> Harper, Edward, *Kenneth Leighton: Quartets Nos. 1 & 2, Seven Variations for String Quartet*, (London: Meridian Records, 2002, sleeve-notes).

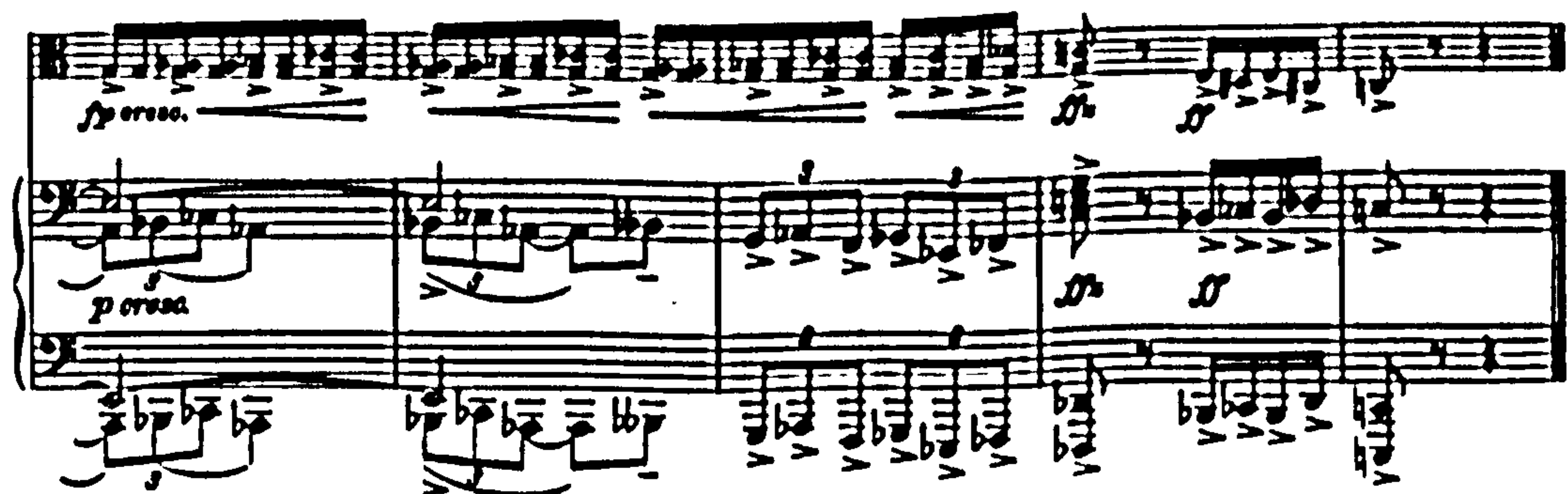


Ex. 4.4: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 82 to 95



In the closing *Fugue* section of the *Fantasia* the piano introduces the fugal theme beneath an extended trill in the viola part. Following a short countermelody the viola states the fugal theme a fifth higher, the fugue continuing in three parts, with a continuous semiquaver movement moving between each part. The only pause in the relentless counterpoint of the section is provided by a return of the chorale section of the work, a cyclical statement from the chordal opening being introduced at bar 386. Following this point a unifying summary of the work is heard with a combination of figures from all sections of the work, but particularly the fugue and the chorale. The *Fantasia* culminates abruptly with the five-note theme combined with an altered version of the BACH theme (Ex. 4.5).

Ex. 4.5: *Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 – bars 457 to 461



While the *Fantasia* is open and obvious about the inclusion of fugal techniques within the counterpoint – most particularly with the fugue that closes the work – the quartet is not as concentrated on fugal writing in as extended a manner. There are a number of examples throughout the quartet that display clear fugal treatment of a theme, however there are no examples of a full-length fugue as in the *Fantasia*. Examples of fugal passages in the quartet can be found from bar 87 of the first movement, where each entry sees the theme altered slightly to be accommodated into the movement – a more obvious and stricter fugal passage can be found at bar 173 of the same movement (Ex. 4.6). The viola is again the favoured instrument in introducing this new section, as at the opening of the work.

Ex. 4.6: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 173 to 197

A tempo - make energetic

The musical score consists of three systems of four staves each. The first system shows the viola (third staff) introducing a melodic theme with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system continues the development of this theme across all staves. The third system shows the other instruments (Violin I, Violin II, and Violoncello/Double Bass) joining in, with the word 'energetic' written above the staff. The tempo is marked 'A tempo - make energetic' at the beginning.



The depth of the contrapuntal texture within Leighton's writing can be seen to increase in tandem with, and probably as an aid to the conflict and unrest of the movement. Within these periods of turmoil, the counterpoint often reaches a head at the climax of these sections with an increase in close imitative writing, followed by a change of texture – usually something more homophonic – as a rapid diffusion of tension is observed (Ex. 4.7). When climaxes are introduced in this way by Leighton the effect is larger, with a gradual increase in tension and layers of the texture. Often the music creeps upwards slowly in pitch in a subtle chromatic fashion, providing a growing intensity.

Ex. 4.7: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 261 to 274

The musical score consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system (bars 261-274) shows a dense contrapuntal texture. The top two staves (Violin I and Violin II) feature rapid, ascending and descending runs. The bottom two staves (Viola and Cello/Double Bass) provide a more rhythmic foundation. Markings include 'cresc.' (crescendo) above the first staff, 'appassionato' and 'ritco' (ritardando) below the third staff. The second system continues this texture, with 'martellato' (martellato) markings above the first and third staves, indicating a more percussive or accented playing style. The overall texture is highly contrapuntal, with many overlapping melodic lines.

Perhaps of all Leighton's compositions so far, his economy and use of musical ideas is at its most efficient and inventive in these two works. Practically all of the major material here is made up from just a few small kernels, extended and adapted as necessary. The string

quartet is one of the first of his works in which each new theme, whilst remaining individual can be seen to be related to previous themes, working all the way back to the opening musical figures of the work. In the case of this quartet much of the musical material can be, to some extent, traced back to the opening three-note rising figure, which is also a simplified version of the five-note theme first heard in the *Piano Concerto No. 1* (see Ex. 3.1 Chapter 3 and Ex. 4.1). While sonata form is strongly suggested within the opening movement, the movement as a whole is one long development of that first theme. The influence of these three rising notes can be seen in each movement, providing a more subtle cyclical effect to unify the work as a whole, the link between movements not being so immediately obvious. The rising three-note figure is suggested, with slightly altered small rising figures, at the opening of the second movement in the first violin (Ex. 4.8) and the introduction of the second theme, also in the first violin, clearly states the original (Ex. 4.9). In the unison opening of the third movement, the end of the opening phrase also finds a statement of the rising figure (Ex. 4.10).

Ex. 4.8: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 2, bars 1 to 5





Ex. 4.9: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 2, bars 31 to 34



Ex. 4.10: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 1 to 6

*Allegro molto e ritmico (sempre energico)* ♩ = 126-132



Following this period of unison writing, material found in the first violin part that makes use of the inversion of the rising figure, is joined by a viola and cello accompaniment that presents a contrary motion version of the rising figure and its inversion (Ex. 4.11). An altered inversion of the rising figure in bar three is also clear in response to the opening phrase, which also goes on to become an important musical figure within the final movement.

Ex. 4.11: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 14 to 21



Other aspects of musical economy include the augmentation of the lower mordent theme found in the piano accompaniment at the opening of the *Fantasia* at bar 20 and in the *Allegro ritmico* second section of the work (Ex. 4.12i & ii), and the reversal of roles between the instruments at the end of the first section of the same work, easily transforming the musical material.

Ex. 4.12i: *Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 – bars 18 to 21



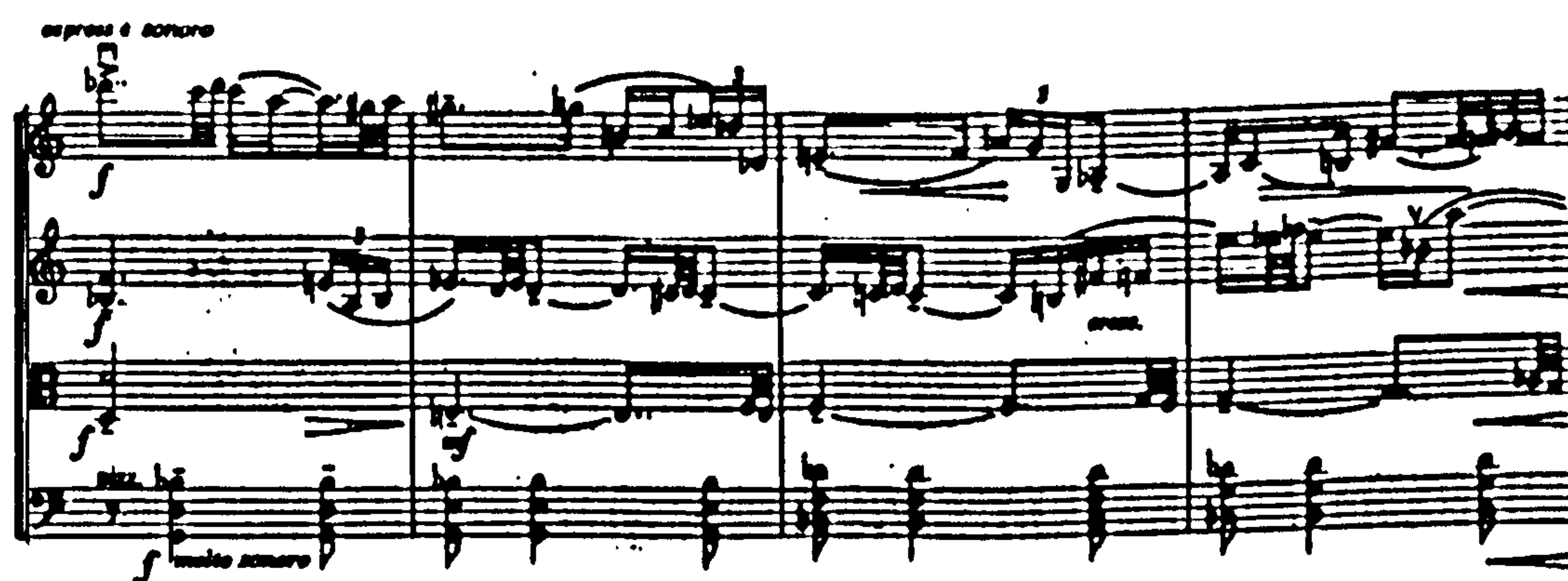
Ex. 4.12ii: *Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 – bars 102 to 103





An element of both unity and economy is found with the short interludes between the sections of the *Fantasia*, which are found to be similar, with a chordal piano accompaniment found beneath cascading semiquavers. Within the string quartet repetitive rhythmic figures now become hidden within the increased complexity of the work; an ostinato accompaniment (akin to the early piano works) at the opening of the second movement soon becomes less noticeable, yet being more persistent than ostinato accompaniments of previous works. A similar point applies to Leighton's continuing fondness of a repetitive quaver-crotchet-quaver rhythm accompaniment figures (used both *arco* and *pizzicato*), prevalent in his earlier works for strings, which is found in both the *Fantasia* and the string quartet, however, not as noticeable within his developing style (Ex. 4.13i & ii).

Ex. 4.13i: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 2, bars 82 to 85



Ex. 4.13ii: *Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 – bars 192 to 196



Within the counterpoint of both works – but mainly in the quartet and where the writing is not fugal – phrases are often derivative of the previous one moving between parts of the texture, providing an extra layer of variation within the music, as well as an increasing complexity. The second violin figure near the opening of the quartet is based upon the preceding viola line, providing early two-part counterpoint along with new and developing material from short musical phrases, allowing an early climax at just bar 31 (see Ex. 4.2 bars 1 to 16). Towards the conclusion of the climax of the second movement stretto-like imitative entries indicate the use of fugal techniques within Leighton's counterpoint. With extra possibilities provided by the increased use of counterpoint within his works, Leighton can more effectively increase a mood of tension, such as that at the opening of the quartet, either gradually or more quickly. In this way he had discovered, and begun to master, an extra dimension of flexibility.

The five-note theme from the first piano concerto plays a significant role in both the *Fantasia* and the quartet. Aside from supplying the main musical figure of three notes on which much of the quartet is based, it is stated in its full form rhythmically and in both original and melodically altered versions in these two works. In the slow first section of the *Fantasia*, there is no obvious use of the five-note theme, but the faster section that follows sees an increase in its appearance, beginning with the introduction of the rhythm in the imitative piano accompaniment from bar 127 (Ex. 4.14).



Ex. 4.14: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 126 to 129

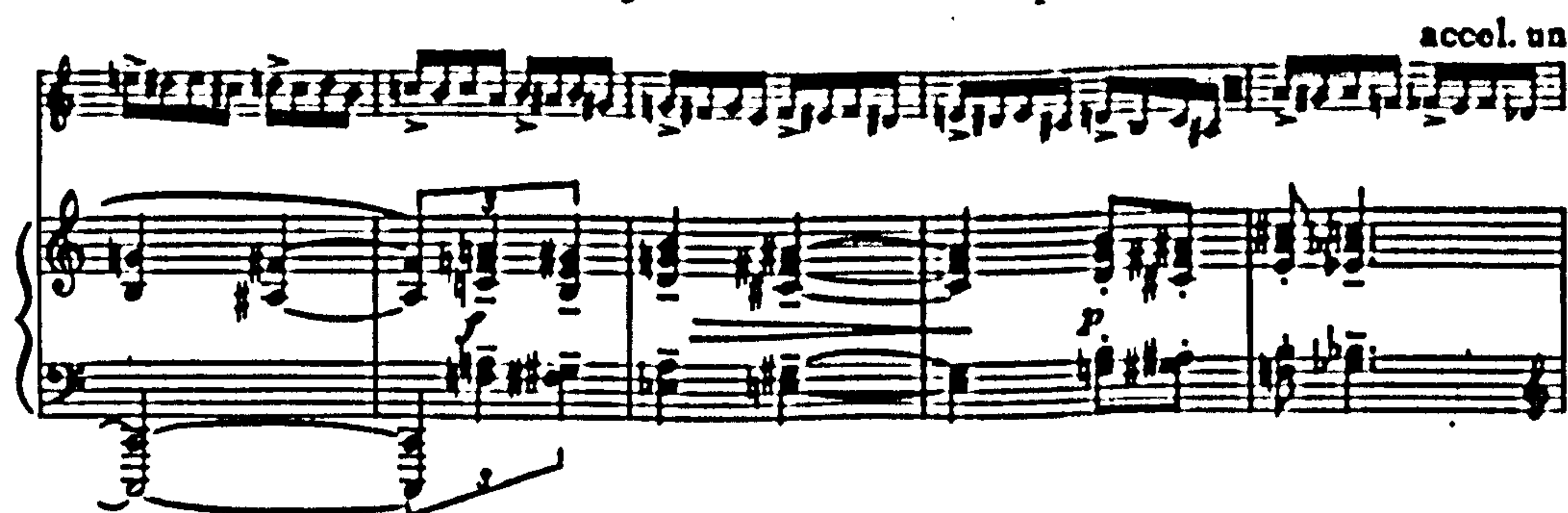


Although heard in the viola it is mostly confined to the piano part, except for the declamatory climax of the section which sees a rapidly descending sequence formed of the inversion of the five-note theme in the viola part, which becomes diminished into sextuplet semiquavers and extended slightly (Ex. 4.15). This rapidly descending sequence can be observed once more at the crux of the *Chorale* section, once again in the viola (Ex. 4.16). Following that the five-note theme becomes a strong feature of the piano accompaniment in the coda of the work, and in particular of the closing bars of the work (see Ex. 4.5).

Ex. 4.15: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 159 to 129



Ex. 4.16: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 332 to 336



The string quartet is more overt in its use of the five-note theme, which is first suggested in the opening bars and in the middle of the viola theme at bars 15 and 16 (see Ex. 4.2). It is found within much of the thematic material in the first movement occurring on a number of occasions, the three-note rising figure from the opening often developing to become the five-note theme in melody or rhythm alone (Ex. 4.17).

Ex. 4.17: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 35 to 40



Other examples find it in fragmentary form as a figure of decoration within longer melodic lines (Ex. 4.18) and it is found augmented and with a new dotted rhythm at the first violin line from bar 61 of the first movement (Ex. 4.19).

Ex. 4.18: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 268 to 274





Ex. 4.19: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 1, bars 58 to 63



Glimpses of the five-note theme in the second movement, mostly in fragmentary form, link the two movements together; although it is not a predominant factor within the material of the slow movement, diminution of the rhythm can be found as the movement reaches its climax (Ex. 4.20). The opening unison section of the third movement of the quartet states the rhythm of the five-note theme (see Ex. 4.10), which along with the melody becomes a major feature of the musical material of this movement, unifying the work as a whole. From bar 256 of the final movement both violin lines are also based on the recurring five-note theme (Ex. 4.21).

Ex. 4.20: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 56 to 61

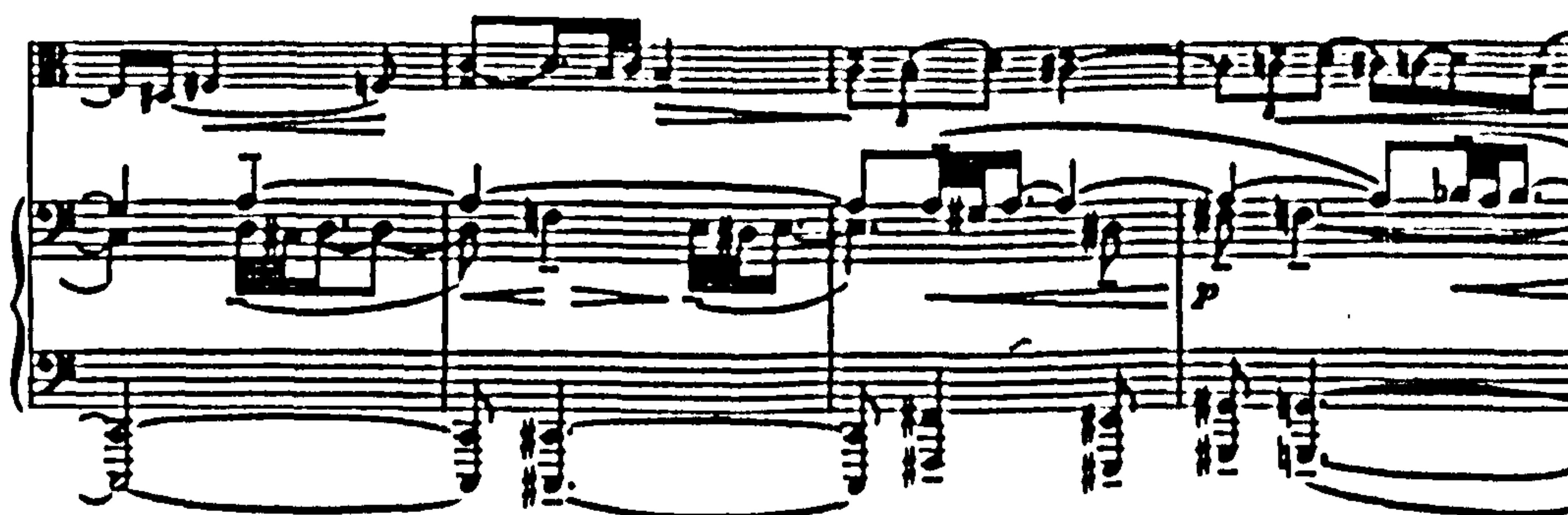


Ex. 4.21: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 251 to 264

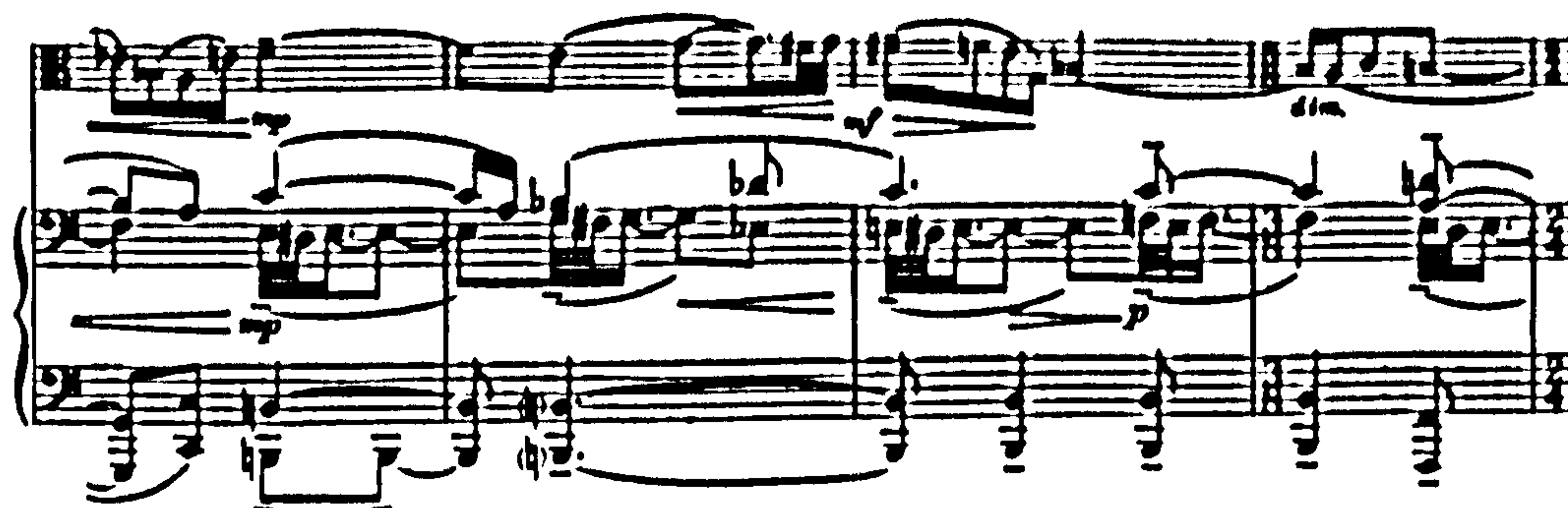


The melodic material used for sequences within these two works often involves the five-note theme. Where sequences are not based on it, they are more subtle and less strict in their execution; this can be seen close to the opening of the *Fantasia* in the piano accompaniment (Ex. 4.22). Also in the opening section of the *Fantasia*, the right hand of the piano accompaniment uses the five-note theme in a rising and falling figure from bar 33 (Ex. 4.23).

Ex. 4.22: *Fantasia on the Name BACH* for Viola and Piano Opus 29 – bars 6 to 13







Ex. 4.23: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 31 to 37



The repetitive unity supplied by the use of the BACH theme (B flat, A, C, B natural) is used to great effect in a large number of ways throughout the *Fantasia*, displaying an advanced sense of musical economy. While the short and particularly restrictive theme of four notes goes a long way within the music, Leighton chooses to be open and obvious about how it is used, the theme remaining visible most of the time through the various aspects of varying texture and rhythmic invention found through this work. From its first statement at the original pitch in the viola, above a lower mordent accompaniment figure used in the melodic material of the work, the theme is present but not always noticeable throughout (Ex. 4.24).

Ex. 4.24: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 1 to 5

Adagio sostenuto  $\text{♩. 66}$

VIOLA

pp espressa.  
(acuto sempre)

PIANO

pp il tono molto sostenuto  
con la sempre

Following on from the first statement in straight crotchets in bars two and three, the BACH theme is heard transposed down a tritone with a different rhythm, in bars five and six as part of the opening subject of the work, again in the viola. It is heard in the piano for the first time in octaves in the left hand in bars eight and nine, with a different rhythm once again. The BACH theme is found in a wide range of transposed and rhythmically altered forms, but also melodically altered: at bar 50 in the left hand of the piano, the theme is found in transposed and inversion in octaves (Ex. 2.25). It is also to be found harmonised chordally just a few bars later at bar 56 (Ex. 2.26).

Ex. 4.25: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 50 to 51

pp  
con la sempre



Ex. 4.26: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 53 to 59

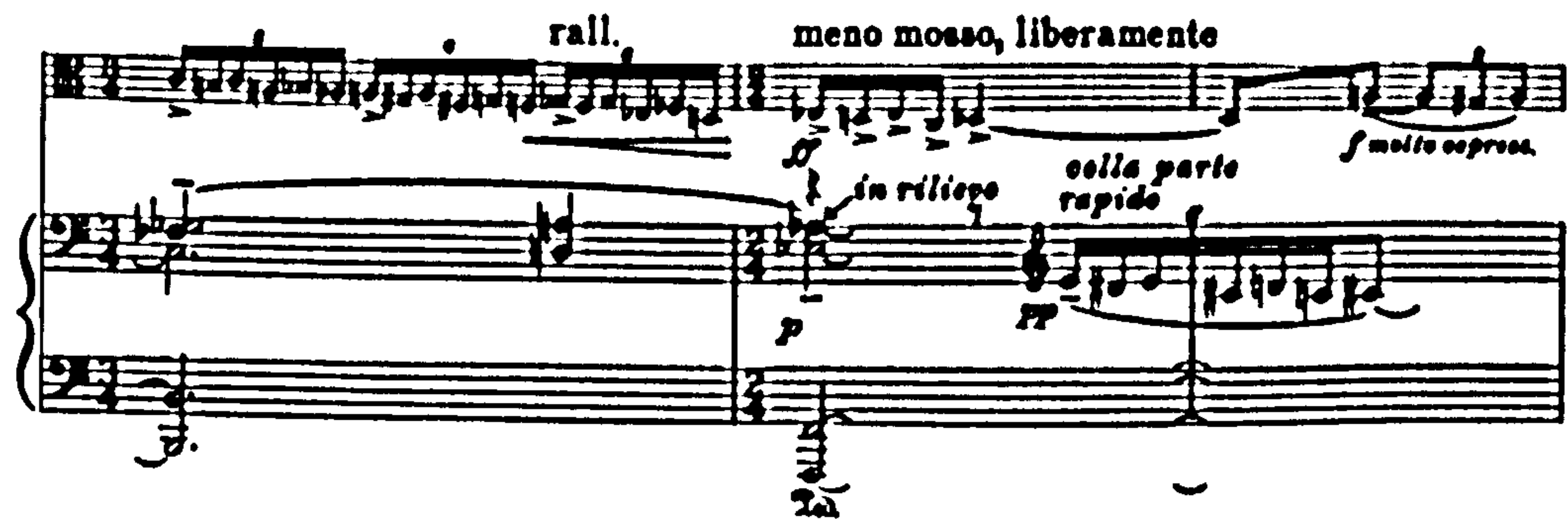
At the opening of the second section of the work (*Allegro ritmico*) beginning at bar 85, the BACH theme once again begins the new main subject, with a new dotted rhythm (Ex. 4.27); this is subsequently adopted in thirds and octaves by the piano at bar 105 as part of this scherzo-like section. A repetitive variation of the order is found in both the solo viola and accompaniment textures from bar 130 (Ex. 4.28).

Ex. 4.27: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 84 to 88

Ex. 4.28: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 130 to 133

A fragmented form of the BACH theme can be seen from bar 192 in the solo viola part and at bar 259, an altered version of the BACH theme is combined with the rhythm of the five-note theme from the opening of the first piano concerto, which is followed by a slightly extended version of the theme in inversion in the right hand of the piano (Ex. 4.29).

Ex. 4.29: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 258 to 260



A new theme is created at bar 216 using a varied order of the BACH theme; the original 'Chorale' theme that begins at bar 273 uses the four-note theme as the basis for the opening phrase in the piano, and used in the viola echo at bar 277 and following each subsequent phrase. There seems to be almost no limit to how Leighton is able to include the BACH theme on every possible occasion in the *Fantasia*, this short theme of four notes acting as the glue that unifies the work. However, almost unexpectedly there is no clear and obvious final statement of the BACH theme at the conclusion of the fugue, Leighton at this point choosing to employ a contrary motion of a slightly extended version of it between the viola and piano in the last two bars of the work (see Ex. 4.5).

A significant new feature that appears for the first time in the *Fantasia*, and that was to find its way into a number of Leighton's later works, shows the influence of, and is a further tribute to, the music of Bach. The use of a chorale tune in Leighton's music begins in the

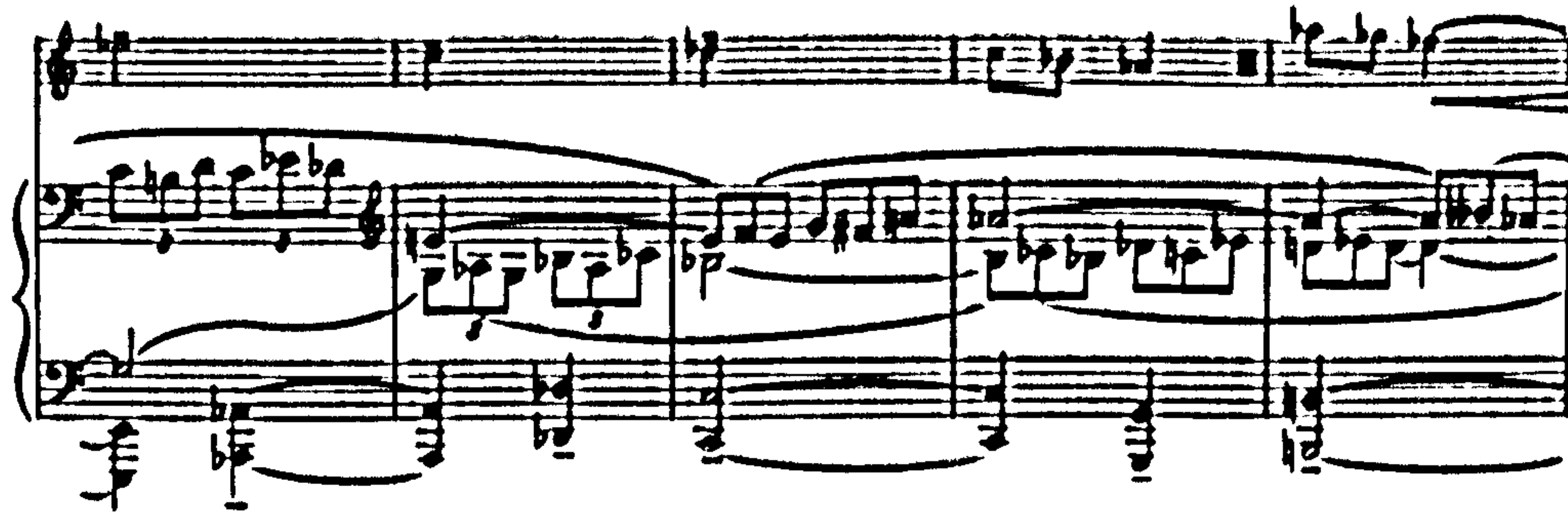


third section of the *Fantasia* (entitled *Chorale*) – on this first occasion the chorale is an original tune as opposed to a Lutheran chorale or a hymn tune (in later works, he does make use of both of these). The chorale tune is, however, based on the retrograde of the BACH theme – each phrase is presented in the piano richly harmonised in Leighton's developing and individual musical language, answered by the viola stating the BACH theme at varying pitches (Ex. 4.30).

Ex. 4.30: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 273 to 279

As with any other theme in Leighton's music, the chorale goes through a number of variations, in this instance beginning with the triplet quaver figures (also based on the BACH theme) beneath the viola statement (Ex. 4.31). Additional diminution and cross rhythms between both viola and piano parts, as well as a gradual growth in dynamics, allow the tension to be intensify towards the peak of the section, which accumulates, with an increase in counterpoint, towards the closing *Fugue*.

Ex. 4.31: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 291 to 301



Within these works Leighton continues and develops his fondness for low and rich sonorities within the textural nuances of his scoring for instruments. There is ample opportunity with the characteristic tone of the viola for him to make use of these lower areas of the instrument's range – Leighton also favours the middle and lower range of the piano throughout, beginning with a characteristic dark and minor opening with a sustained G over three octaves decorated by a repetitive lower mordent figure. In the quartet, while he uses much of the rich low and medium textures of the instruments, the medium necessitates that the whole range of the instruments are made use of to provide sufficient variation and interest throughout this substantial work.

Further new techniques of textural variation can also be seen within the *Fantasia*, the most obvious of which involves the metre, which becomes blurred and vague within the grouping of the piano semiquavers and the subsequent heavy syncopation, a technique which substantially increases tension and conflict (Ex. 4.32). This is taken a step further with the concurrent use of different time signatures from bar 233 onwards (Ex. 4.33).



Ex. 4.32: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 175 to 178



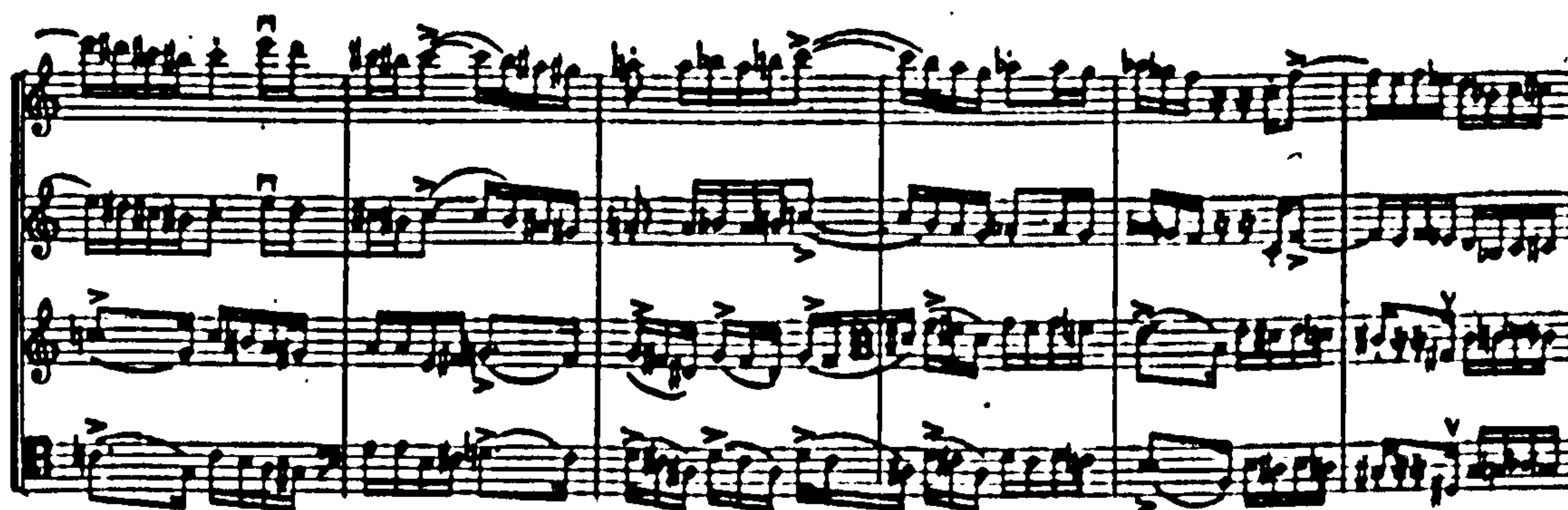
Ex. 4.33: *Fantasia on the Name BACH for Viola and Piano* Opus 29 – bars 232 to 236



Eventually, at the climax of this second section of the *Fantasia*, a new textural technique is introduced into the piano part, in which the transposed BACH theme is played *in rilievo* at the top of left hand chords, while the right hand, below a lyrical viola melody, becomes increasingly dissonant and abstract. As the final note of the BACH theme is heard in the left hand, the right hand of the piano begins a *senza misura* blurring of the BACH theme high in the piano; this enhances some of the improvised qualities of the work as a whole, and further diffuses the considerable accumulated tension prior to this in preparation for the *Chorale* section. Within the quartet also, there are a number of occasions in which the metre becomes indistinct; a tussle between two time signatures found at both the *Scherzando* of the first movement and the opening section of the final movement is reminiscent of a similar tussle in the almost contemporary scherzo of the *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra* Opus 31.

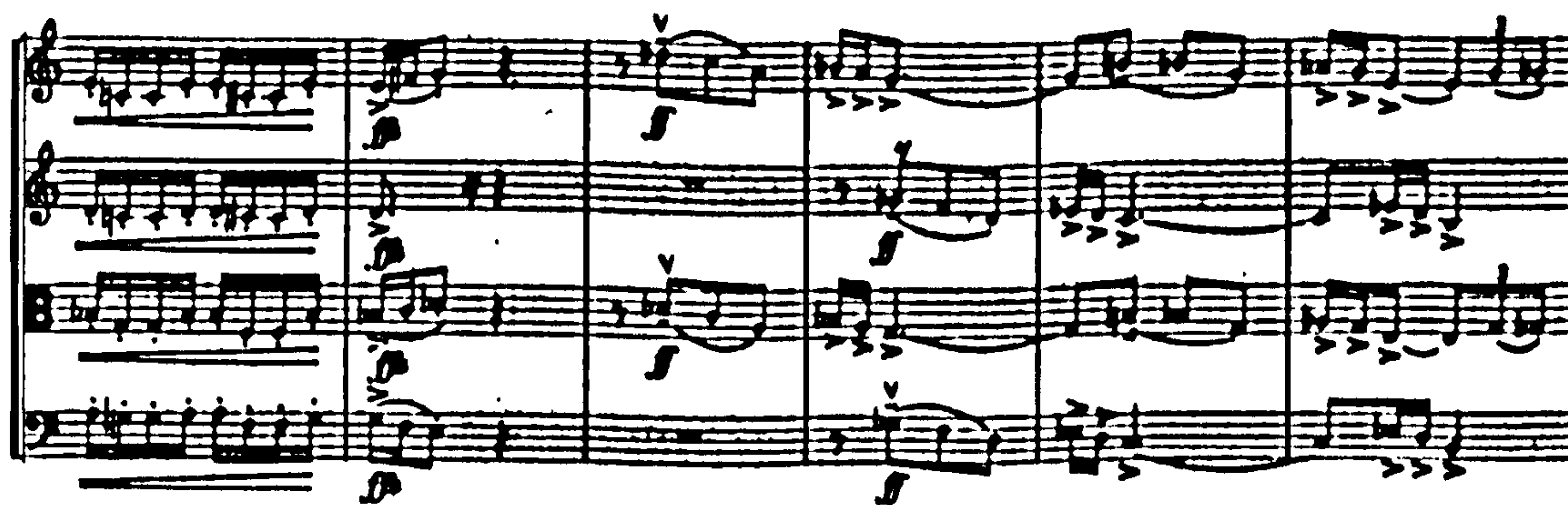
Within the textures used in the quartet, links with Leighton's choral writing can be observed. Pairing of the instruments in a similar manner to those used within four-part writing for voices can be seen at various points. Beginning in the *Veris Gratia Cantata* the soprano and alto parts of the chorus are paired together in parallel writing, while the bass and tenor parts are similarly paired – this translates easily and effectively into pairings of the two violins and the viola with the cello (Ex. 4.34).

Ex. 4.34: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 2, bars 178 to 183



The alternative pairing of first violin with viola an octave apart and second violin with cello also an octave apart can be observed – this is a more favoured pairing in his later choral music, with soprano with tenor and alto with bass each pairing an octave apart (Ex. 4.35).

Ex. 4.35: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 190 to 195



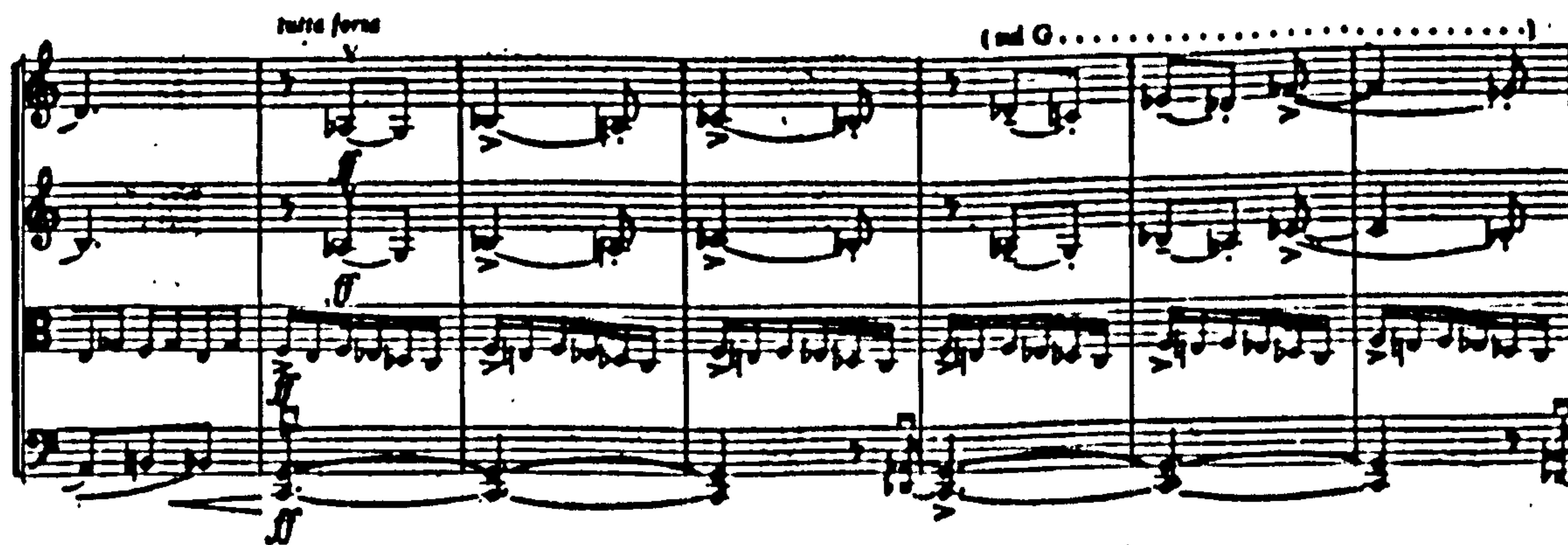


There is a good number of other new textures within the quartet: at the opening of the second movement, the first theme is heard a third higher a few bars later forming two-part counterpoint above a chordal accompaniment; a little later on in the second movement, there is a sustained tremolo line in the second violin in between two-part counterpoint in the first violin and viola (Ex. 4.36); later still two-part counterpoint is found beneath oscillating triplet semiquavers in the first and second violins; and in the final movement, a sinewy constant dissonance is provided by the viola in the middle of a chordal texture (Ex. 4.37).

Ex. 4.36: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 2, bars 21 to 25



Ex. 4.37: *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32 – movement 3, bars 307 to 313



Contrasts remain a vital feature of Leighton's maturing compositional style, the main and clearest contrasts in the *Fantasia* being provided between the four distinct sections, and the

various series of climaxes also found within the work. The constantly evolving moods and textures of the string quartet are further evidence of this method of ensuring maximum interest throughout extended sections of music. In the final movement of the quartet, in opposition to the extended counterpoint contained in the opening two movements, substantial periods of unison writing can be observed, suggesting that Leighton was conscious and aware of the possibility of over-complicating his music with too much counterpoint. Indeed, particularly fast and agitated sections within the music tend to offer a much less contrapuntal and unified texture. Contrasts between sections are often heightened within Leighton's music with the use of brief dramatic pauses, such as at the beginning of the coda at the very end of the string quartet.

Rhythmic techniques are also an important aspect of Leighton's maturing musical language. Following his time in Rome, there is a particularly keen sharpness to his use of rhythmic figures within his works. The double-dotted rhythm was to become a typical Leighton fingerprint within his later works, but is observable in both of these works, particularly within the second movement of the quartet, and within the *Fantasia*, although sometimes reversed in both of these works to give a scotch-snap flavour. Diminution of flowing accompaniment rhythms is also an effective way of creating tension within his music over a prolonged period and on top of counterpoint and dissonance. This keen rhythmic sense is also vital within the use of the scherzo in Leighton's work, clearly now one of Leighton's favoured styles of writing. The string quartet form is an excellent outlet for this form and there are a number of *Scherzoso* sections within the string quartet.



Serial techniques can be clearly observed in both works from this genre; this is particularly subtle within the *Fantasia* where the piano presents all twelve notes of a note-row within the first ten bars of the work, while the viola includes eleven of the twelve (Ex. 4.24 and 4.22). The *String Quartet No. 1* presents note-rows in a more transparent manner; the first theme heard in the viola contains all twelve notes required, and the lyrical and wide-ranging first theme of the second movement in the first violin similarly contains all twelve (Ex. 4.8). As is now typical, there is no specific tonic key throughout the *Fantasia* or any of the three movements of the *String Quartet No. 1*.

In the *Fantasia*, Leighton once again writes relentlessly for the soloist as is evident in his previous concertos. There are very few opportunities for the piano to take the spotlight from the soloist, which is in contrast to the two violin sonatas, where the title suggests both instruments as soloists, together creating a chamber group rather than one of soloist and accompanist. The piano does however play a pivotal role in the structure and texture of this work, despite its overriding role as accompanist, and Leighton is clearly aware of the almost endless possibilities of the piano as a Romantic, large and varied instrument.

Romantic elements of Leighton's style are still evident despite increases in complexity, counterpoint and dissonance. Manipulations of tempi are a more frequent feature within his music. The continuing lyrical qualities of the work combine with these changing speeds, particularly at poignant sections, and often themes become meandering and wide-ranging. The spontaneity and unpredictability of his burgeoning musical language are supported by these changes of speed at appropriate points, as well as general frequent changes of

direction, rhythmic qualities and textures within the scoring. There are certain other features which could be seen as typically Romantic in style – a major aspect of Leighton's music is an intense and emotionally charged quality that manifests itself with a prolific use of suggested minor keys within many of his works.

### Piano Music

Works written for the piano, and containing the piano within their scoring, continued to be an important feature of Leighton's output while at the University of Leeds. There are five fairly substantial works for solo piano composed in these years – the highest number of any genre of this period – beginning with the *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22. They represent some of the most significant developments in Leighton's musical language; it is particularly apt that he should have made some of these advances and have experimented the most in composing for his own instrument. Of the five works two remain unpublished (*Winter Scenes* of 1953 and *Sonata No. 3* Opus 27 of 1954), and three were published – *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 and the *Variations* Opus 30 by Novello, and the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* Opus 24 by Ricordi as part of Leighton's first prize success at the Busoni Festival in 1956, and latterly by Novello. The manuscripts of both *Winter Scenes* and the *Sonata No. 3* contain a number of minor modifications that appear to be in Leighton's hand.

Perhaps the most important feature of Leighton's piano music during this period is the further assimilation of serial techniques into his personal language. The most significant developments in this area were to be made within his piano music, and the *Variations* Opus 30 was to be his first work that was openly serial, with the note-row stated at the head of



the manuscript and the published score. Leighton's preceding work, the unpublished *Sonata No. 3* is an evident precursor to this work – whereas the *Variations* see Leighton comfortably making use of serial techniques clearly within tonal boundaries and melodic material, the slightly earlier *Sonata No. 3* is almost atonal in its unusual language, employing significantly higher levels of chromatic movement and dissonance, with the majority of melodic lines being disjunct – the dense nature of the *Sonata* also displays an advanced level of complexity. A comparison between the two works shows an element of extensive experimentation with serial techniques to the point of atonality within the *Sonata*, with a more developed sense of acceptance and the amalgamation of serial techniques in the later *Variations*. To an extent the *Variations* present a tonal work with a note-row recurring throughout in various forms that determines the colour of the harmonic language, while the *Sonata* represents a temporary and significant shift towards the abandonment of tonality altogether. The level of difficulty in the two works is quite different: the complexity of the *Sonata* demands much more of the player's capabilities, whereas there is a more balanced aspect to the nine movements of the *Variations*, with Leighton now able to accept that serial techniques can also contain a degree of simplicity as opposed to over-complexity.

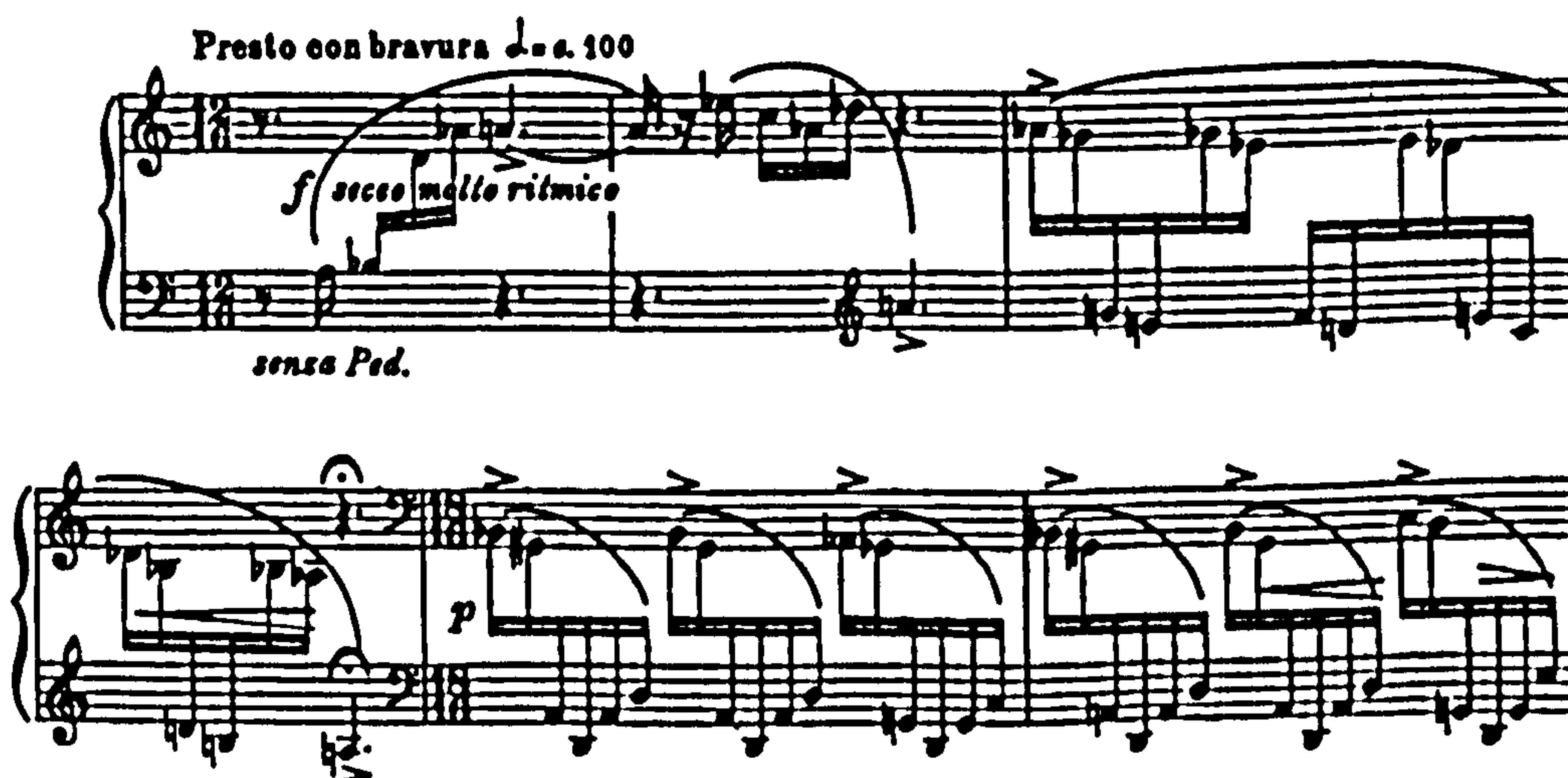
While the *Five Studies* are not overtly serial, they can be compared with earlier works that contain hints of serial techniques; the left hand melody of the first study, beginning in bar three, has covered with some repetition all twelve notes of a note-row by bar 11, and the ambiguity of a central tonic key through a rich harmonic variety and rapidly changing keys continues to persist. The fourth and fifth studies also present a note-row within the first two phrases of their melodic material (Ex. 4.38i & ii). The textures contained within this

work are the most varied to this point, Leighton's piano writing reaching new levels of virtuosity and becomes increasingly inventive and orchestral – the imposing opening statement of the first study signalling the arrival of Leighton's personal musical language is similar to that found in other works of this period, in particular *The Birds*.

Ex. 4.38i: *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 – forth study, bars 1 to 4



Ex. 4.38ii: *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 – fifth study, bars 1 to 6



The introduction of the note-row at the very opening of both the *Sonata No. 3* and the *Variations* demonstrates an increased confidence in the use of serial technique. There is some repetition in the melody of the opening bars of the introduction section of the *Sonata No. 3* but the note-row (Ex. 4.39), can be clearly seen stated in the first of three similar and free phrases before the *Allegro molto e energico*. The three central notes of the note-row in the




*Introduzione* of the *Variations* form an accompaniment figure as the rest of the note-row is stated on either side (Ex 4.40).

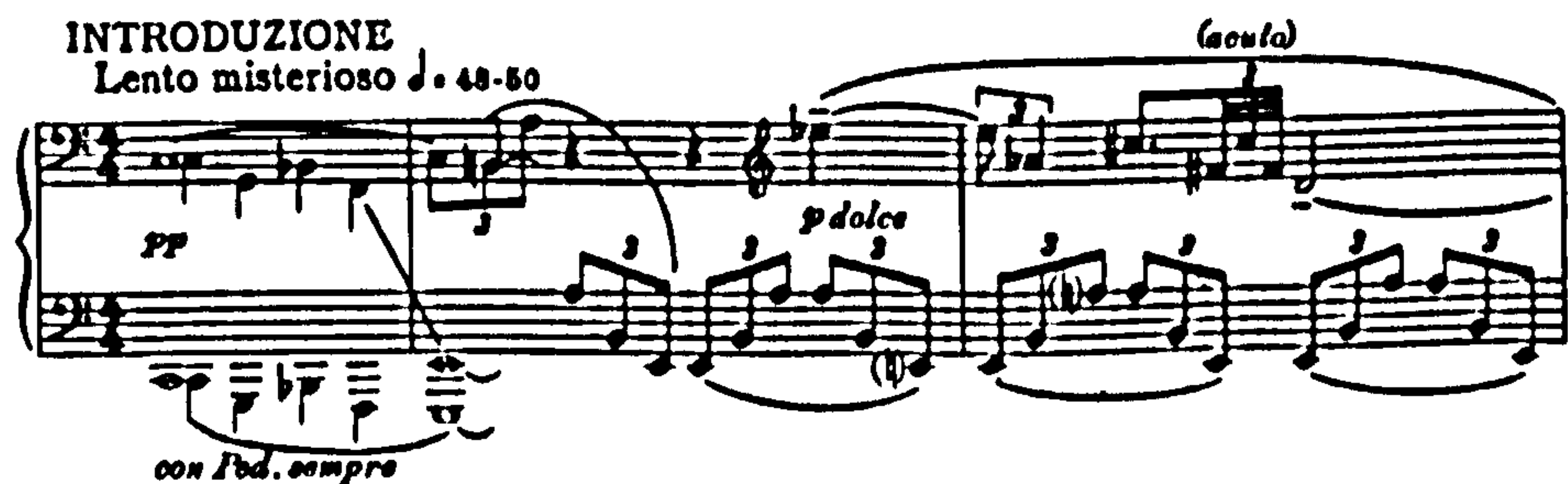
Ex. 4.39: *Sonata No.3* Opus 27 – movement 1, bars 1 to 4



Ex. 4.40: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Introduzione*, bars 1 to 3

  
**VARIATIONS**  
 for Piano  
 KENNETH LEIGHTON  
 Opus 30

**INTRODUZIONE**  
 Lento misterioso ♩. 48-50



The remaining movements of the *Sonata No. 3* showed a similarly quick introduction of a note-row to that found in the first movement, although subsequent use within each movement of the *Sonata No. 3* is not obvious. On the other hand the *Variations* use much more identifiable methods of stating the different versions of the note-row, especially with the integration of tonal language into this serial work.

The *Variations* Opus 30 are a set of variations on the note-row presented at the opening of the score as opposed to the traditional theme contained in an opening movement; the opening movement, while being titled *Introduzione*, is in effect the first variation. As soon as the twelfth note has been heard, the retrograde of the note-row is heard from bar five stated in a similar but developed way. The intervals of the fourth and fifth that are so important within the note-row itself determine much of the melodic and harmonic content of the entire work.

The second variation, *Canzonetta*, states a transposed version of the note-row in the opening bars, that gives the impression of the opening of a fugue, but in fact alternates between two-part invention and chordal textures in the right hand – the rhythm of the five-note theme from the first piano concerto becomes evident in this movement. The retrograde of the note row is found at the opening of the third variation, *Ninna-Nanna*, the note-row is split between the two hands, the fifth note provided by the recurring E flat of the left hand (Ex. 4.41). The repetition of notes in this way by Leighton serves to disguise the serial base of the work a little. The retrograde inversion of the note-row is found at bar six; within his customary musical economy the differing versions of the note-row in this work are used often as a reply to each statement.

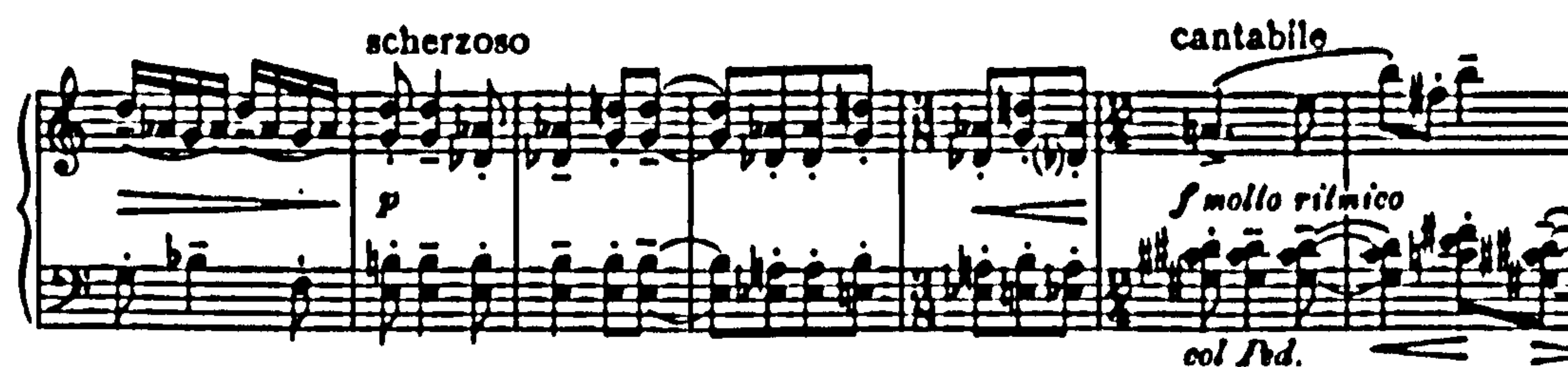


Ex. 4.41: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Ninna-Nanna*, bars 1 to 11

NINNA - NANNA  
Cullante ♩ = 6, 120

The *Toccata* is the first really virtuosic movement of the *Variations* – the soft repetitive semiquaver E's are interrupted by the retrograde inversion of the note-row. This semiquaver movement in the right hand continues throughout much of the movement, broken only by the *Scherzoso* section that contains cyclical syncopated chords from the *Canzonetta* (Ex. 4.42). The *Notturmo* that follows provides a contrasting atmosphere suggestive of night: the retrograde of the note-row is presented in a decorated form in the right hand, the rhythm related to that found in the *Introduzione* – similarly the oscillating triplet quaver two-note chords are suggestive of a development of the broken chords of the first variation. The sixth variation *Valzer* sees a return to the original note-row, stated clearly in the left hand and the inversion is found in the right hand at bar nine; the *un poco ironico* marking that Leighton supplies for this movement suggests a light air to the work, with a somehow sinister distortion of this dance form (Ex. 4.43).

Ex. 4.42: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Toccata*, bars 23 to 29



Ex. 4.43: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Valzer*, bars 1 to 15



The *Fanfara* movement that follows is the most abstract and disjunct of all the movements, concerned with rhythmical and textural techniques: the short and dry chords of the opening that are contrasting in dynamics are made up of the note-row, before the inversion of the note row is found in the right hand (Ex. 4.44). The complexity of the *Fanfara* in terms of rhythm and texture is balanced with the use of unison writing, while the soft chords at the close of the movement are made up of the note-row (Ex. 4.45).



Ex. 4.44: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Fanfara*, bars 1 to 29

**FANFARA**  
Allegro molto ♩ 89-100

*ff* molto duro e secco con bravura

*pp*

*l'uso del pedale molto discreto*

*ff* martellato

Ex. 4.45: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Fanfara*, bars 43 to 49

un poco meno mosso

*pp espress.*

*ppp*

*lunga breve*

*con Ped.*

*senza Ped.*

e) put chord down without sounding

A balance with the *Fanfara* is provided by the *Interludio*, the repetitive and flowing semiquaver figure quoting the note-row in a tonal manner (Ex. 4.46). Further contrast from the dry rhythmic precision of the *Fanfara* is provided by the use of the pedal to blur the lyrical broken chords.

The closing *Fuga* presents the note-row in the fugal theme of the left hand, the rhythm of the statement of the theme similar to that of the *Valzer*. The right hand begins the second fugal statement a fourth higher at bar six, the third statement of this three-part fugue at bar

11. Subtle cyclical elements are found at bars 17 and 18, with a recurrence of the falling figure from the *Canzonetta*, and at bar 54 with the return of the *quasi tromboni* section of the *Introduzione*. The counterpoint begins to become increasingly chordal towards the conclusion with a considerable accumulation of tension, the final chords made up once again of the note-row.

Ex. 4.46: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Interludio*, bars 1 to 5

INTERLUDIO  
Andante, dolce ed innocente

*pp molto legato e cantabile*

Each of the *Five Studies* stands on its own particularly well, with no appearance of cyclical techniques, and they have in the past been performed both in part and as a whole.<sup>30</sup> The first of the pieces confirms the use of the word 'study', being particularly testing in a number of ways – it is reminiscent of Chopin and Liszt etudes. The fiendish and relentless right hand arpeggio semiquaver figuration, demonstrating Leighton's own abilities at the piano, provides (in a sense) an ostinato, with the pattern being regular. An equally difficult challenge is to make the important left hand melody prominent in the middle of the piano texture from bar three, in the midst of all the other activity. Further advancement in this

<sup>30</sup> On 8 November 1956, Leighton performed just two movements from the *Five Studies* in a recital in the Reid Concert Hall, University of Edinburgh.



area can be seen with various new piano textures introduced throughout the studies. The repetitive and almost rondo-like recurring contrary motion figure in the centre of the texture in the second study provides a line of symmetry between the two hands, the melody on the top and bottom of the texture. Leighton's lyricism has now been incorporated into his pianistic style and, to an extent, vice versa. The virtuosic semiquaver figures of the third study, above a repetitive left hand figure, are a little reminiscent of Franz Schubert's *Impromptu in E flat Opus 90 No. 2* in their rising and falling patterns, providing a challenge to the player to remain soft and yet restless.

The fourth and longest study is the only one requiring three staves and is the richest in terms of texture and harmony, with much greater use of obvious dissonance to great effect; there is also an aspect of complexity within the rhythmic qualities of the melodic material. The fifth study is the most virtuosic and energetic, a furious toccata providing a major contrast to the fourth, taking the dissonance and tension of Leighton's music to new limits; the constant semiquaver figuration shared between the right and left hands is reminiscent of his early attempts at *toccatas* as a schoolboy – glimpses of his lyrical style can be found within the complexity once again, in the left hand before bar 60 (Ex. 4.47).

Serial techniques are present in the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* subtitled *Homage to Bach*, although it does not represent an entirely serial work in the same way as the *Variations*. When compared to the work for solo piano of the same name by Ferruccio Busoni, completed in Chicago in 1910, it can be seen that that work was an important influence on Leighton in the use of a *Chorale* movement and having more than one movement entitled

*Fuga*. The movements in Busoni's version are *Preludio corale*, *Fuga I*, *Fuga II*, *Fuga III*, *Intermezzo* and *Fuga IV – Stretta*, whereas the movement titles used by Leighton are *Toccata*, *Chorale*, *Fuga I* and *Fuga II* as well as an untitled introduction. Aside from the obvious influence of counterpoint, some of the larger Lisztian orchestral textures are a feature common to both works (such as the clamorous opening), but that is where the similarity ends. Busoni makes heavy use of the BACH theme and variations on the chorale *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr*, whereas Leighton uses his own original chorale theme and there is no trace of the BACH theme.

Ex. 4.47: *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 – fifth study, bars 52 to 57



Once again, musical economy and unity is vital in the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* along with a strength supplied by the structure of the work; as in the *Variations* the interval of a fourth is important in the typically bold opening statement, with spiky double-dotted rhythms. A note-row is stated in the opening vociferous phrase of the work (Ex. 4.48).



Ex. 4.48: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* for Piano Opus 24 – bars 1 to 9

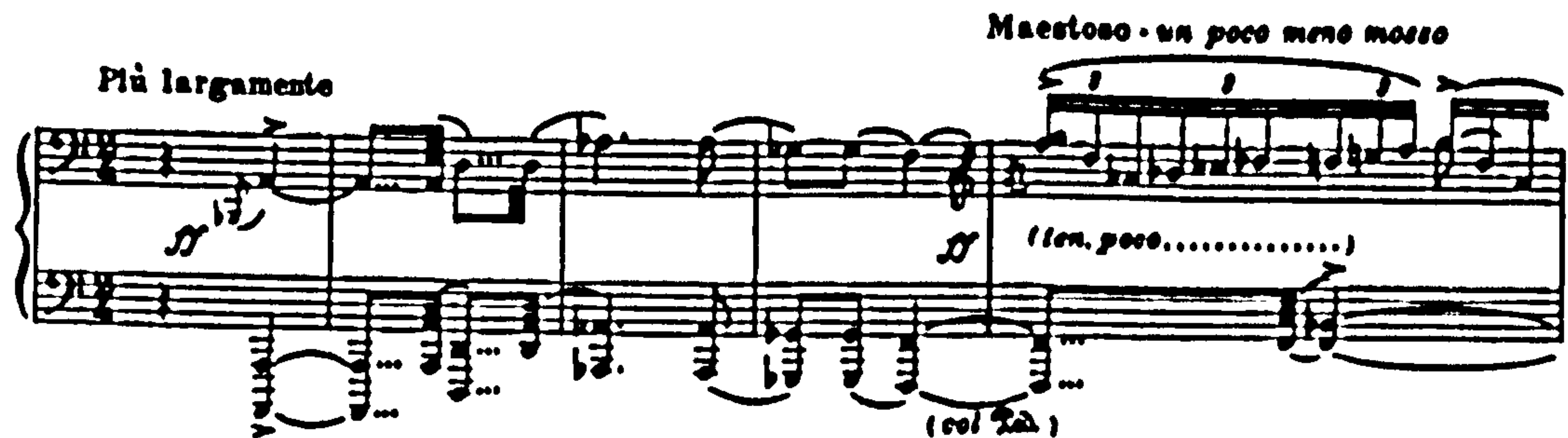
Following the chordal beginning, imitative counterpoint is heard as a contrast. The free opening in which the speed is regularly manipulated sees a number of textures followed by a quick climax and resolution before the *Toccata* begins. The constant, virtuosic and repetitive semiquaver figures are reminiscent of the *Toccata* in the *Variations*, with the interval of the fourth and the second being of importance once more (Ex. 4.49).

Ex. 4.49: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* for Piano Opus 24 – bars 33 to 36

The five-note theme taken from the first piano concerto is stated slowly in the introduction in original and inverted versions and becomes an important part of the melodic material, in both original and inverted forms again, that builds towards the first of two climaxes in the

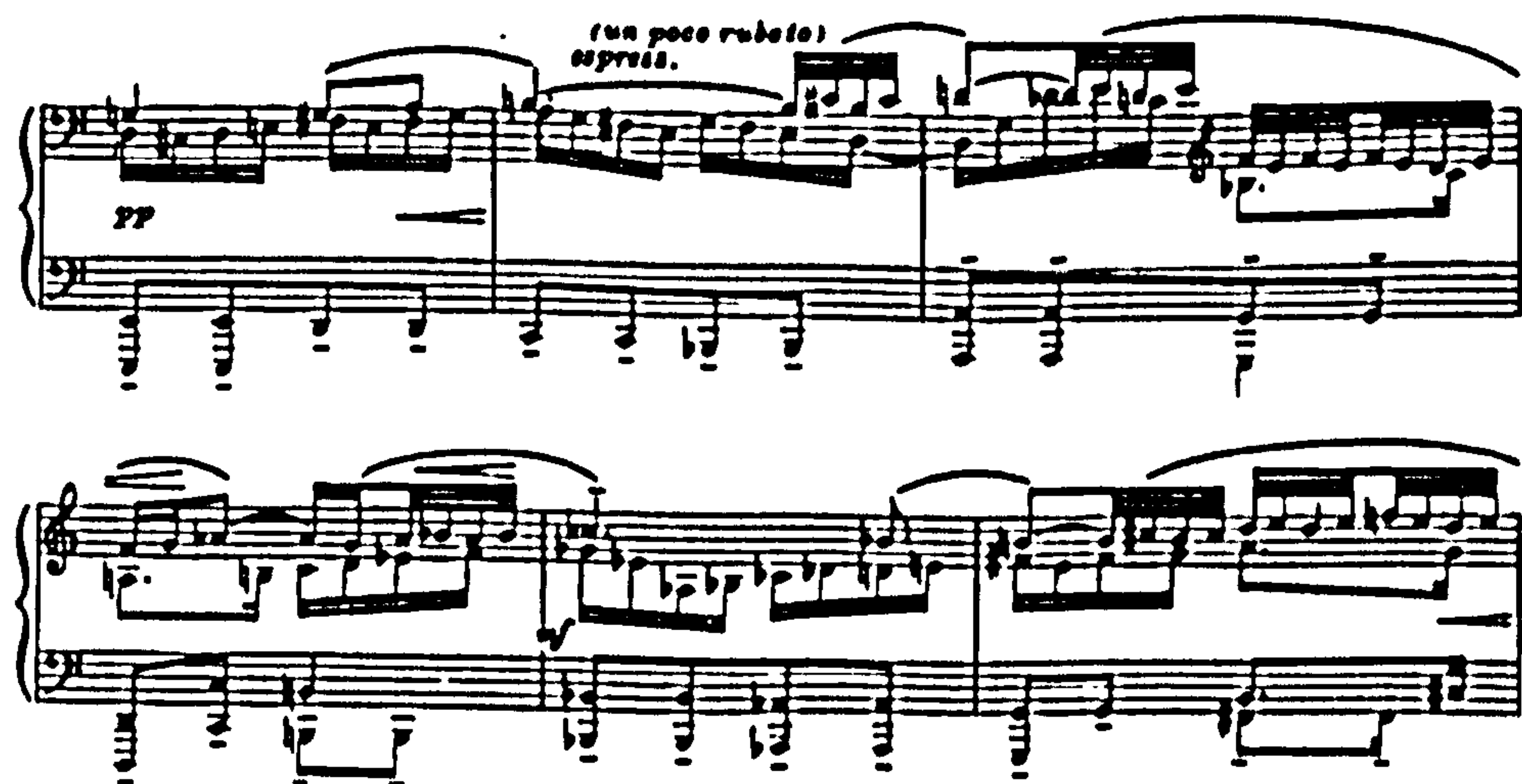
movement. The second climax is based on the double-dotted material of the introduction in inversion (Ex. 4.50).

Ex. 4.50: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica for Piano* Opus 24 – bars 148 to 152



The *Chorale* movement of the *Fantasia* represents the second example of this type of movement, the first being heard in the *Fantasia on the name BACH*. The Chorale is mostly derived from the five-note theme of the first piano concerto: the opening rising figure is a simplified version (as used heavily in the *String Quartet No. 1*), while further into the movement fuller statements can be observed (Ex. 4.51).

Ex. 4.51: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica for Piano* Opus 24 – bars 179 to 181



The lyrical chorale melody becomes decorated as tension increases in an arch-shaped movement, being the only movement not to continue directly into the next, Leighton indicating a brief pause. The unresolved note finds a release of tension with the opening of



the *Fuga I*. This three-part fugue – and the slower of the two *Fugae* – is reminiscent of the closing *Fuga* of the *Variations*. The first statement states the opening note-row of the introduction in inversion, with a return to the double-dotted sharp rhythm of the opening. The fugue is quite strict, with the second entry on the dominant, and uses a difficult fugal theme to realise and bring to fruition (Ex. 4.52). The fugue builds, rising in pitch – and noticeably with the reintroduction of the decoration from the *Chorale* – towards the *Fuga II*.

Ex. 4.52: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* for Piano Opus 24 – bars 221 to 226



This is a substantially different fugue, which releases the accumulated tension once again at its opening, with a substantially more energetic and characteristic scherzo-like movement, containing typical rhythmic and melodic figures from previous scherzos, and in 6/16 time. This three-part fugue is more complex and difficult than *Fuga I*; the oscillating semiquaver figures found in this movement are based on a development of the five-note theme. The movement intensifies in a gradual rise and gain in momentum towards the main climax (marked *tutta forza*); in an arch-shape the descending movement follows before the recapitulation of the introduction and virtuosic final flourish before the closing unison A (Ex. 4.53). A line of symmetry is formed between the two hands in a similar manner to that found in the second of the *Five Studies* Opus 22, as this tension is dissipated before the closing coda.

Ex. 4.53: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica for Piano* Opus 24 – bars 408 to 417

The unpublished suite for piano *Winter Scenes* is unusual within Leighton's piano music of this time. Vivid representations of various aspects associated with winter are presented in seven miniatures. The standard required for performance in *Winter Scenes* is not as high as the piano works that surround it, and could be attempted by younger players. The harmonic language is also not as developed as the earlier *Five Studies* and the later *Sonata No. 3*, being closer to the *Sonata No. 2* Opus 17 in nature. The piano texture and character of each movement reflects the nature of its title: the first movement, *Landscape*, is bleak and sparsely scored; *The Wind* is busy with a continuous and fast semiquaver oscillation and occasional blurred textures, the arch-shape to the movement perhaps presents a prolonged and gradual gust of wind; *Mist* also uses techniques of blurring, with a mysterious and chromatic element; *Woodsprites* are represented by a playful element, with an agile and repetitive right hand figure; *By the Fireside* is the most lyrical movement, a reassuring and sleepy quality obtained with the warmth contained in the rich chordal texture and chromatic movement; *Snowflakes* uses the higher register of the piano and a wide range of keys combined once



more with an oscillating semiquaver figure; and finally, *Carol* is soft, light-hearted and celebratory with a recurring *rondo*-like rising theme. To achieve this variety of textures, Leighton makes full use of the range of the piano and a substantial number of rhythmic techniques – particularly cross-rhythms in *The Wind* (Ex. 4.54).

Ex. 4.54: *Winter Scenes Suite for Piano* (1953) – *The Wind*, bars 54 to 59

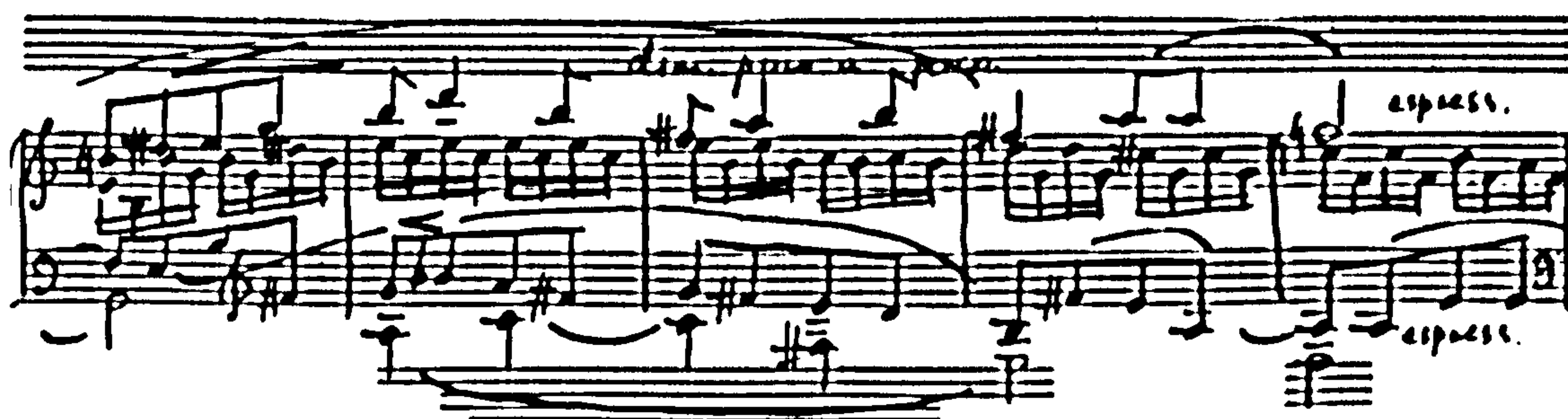


The seven movements of the *Winter Scenes* suite, while not using cyclical themes are united by recurring figures: an oscillating semiquaver figure is typical throughout, sometimes on the interval of a second as in the *The Wind*, *Woodsprites* and the central section of *By the Fireside* (see Ex. 4.54) and, as in the outer sections of *By the Fireside* with larger intervals (Ex. 4.55). The recurring rhythm of quaver-crotchet-quaver found in a large number of Leighton's earlier works makes a re-appearance in this work, with the related rhythm of quaver-crotchet heard repeatedly in *Landscape* and the original quaver-crotchet-quaver rhythm found in *The Wind*.

The forms found within each movement of *Winter Scenes* also show a tendency to be straightforward alongside the use of more traditional harmonic techniques. *Landscape*

provides an ABA construction with a differing central section and recapitulation – also found in the *Woodsprites* – while the arch-shape construction beginning to be favoured by Leighton at this stage is found in *The Wind, Mist* and *By the Fireside*, the clear *rondo* construction of *Carol* also harks back to Leighton's earlier piano music.

Ex. 4.55: *Winter Scenes Suite for Piano* (1953) – *By the Fireside*, bars 9 to 13



Form and structure remain strong in these works for piano: as already discussed, *Winter Scenes* uses traditional forms, a feature also shared by the *Five Studies*, which uses a condensed sonata form, with an exposition, development and recapitulation, in the first and third movements. The remaining movements of the *Five Studies* use *rondo*-form in the second study, an arch-shape in the fourth while the final study has a through-composed feel. The use of form is less clear-cut in the remaining three piano works of this period. The third piano sonata appears to be a typical four-movement work, with a fast-slow-intermezzo-fast construction, however the forms used within the movements are less definable: the first movement contains signs of a modified sonata form, with abstract and detached qualities in the musical material blurring a definite sense of structure. A later comment on the length of the sonata found at the end of the manuscript suggests that Leighton would consider removing the *Intermezzo*; he notes that the work would be '12 [minutes] without Intermezzo', which would leave a fast-slow-fast arrangement (Illustration 4.i).



Illustration 4.i: Leighton's markings at the end of the manuscript for *Sonata No. 3* Opus 27

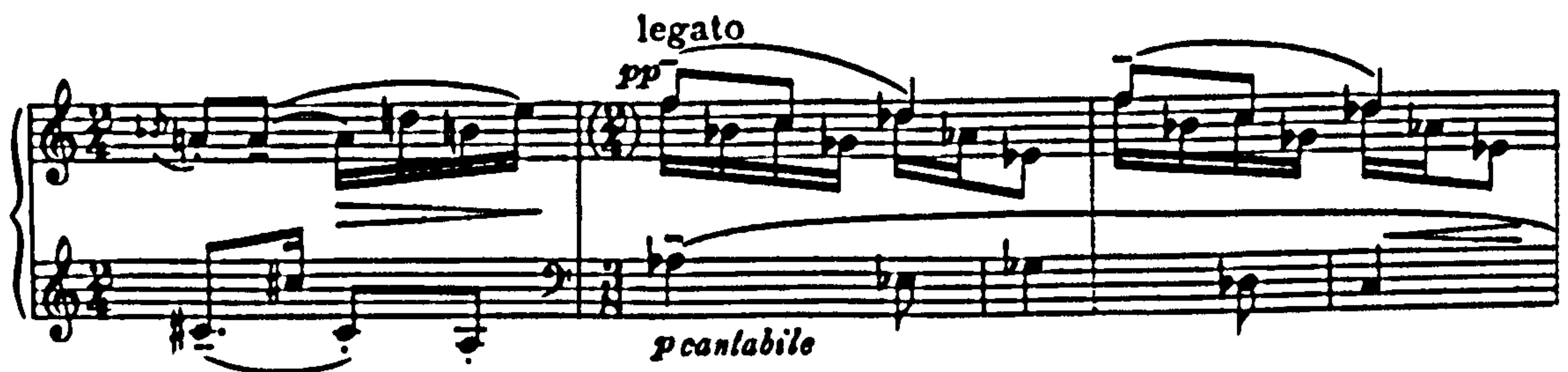


There is a greater use of varying time signatures now within Leighton's music, which removes any sense of predictability from his works, instead adding an element of unease. This is most noticeable in the use of 7/8 time in the second of the *Five Studies* and – among many other examples – the unusual 2/4 + 3/16 time signature found in the even more malleable *Variations*. In addition to the blurring of bar lines and time signatures found in the *Fantasia on the name BACH*, also from this period, there are a number of examples in the piano music of similar techniques. The *Sonata No. 3* also shows an unpredictability of metre, coupled with manipulation of speeds, most notably in the slow second movement. This, combined with the abstract rhythmic qualities and extensive syncopation of the third movement (*Intermezzo*), a feature shared with the final movement, adds to the overall complexity of this work (Ex. 4.56). The simultaneous use of more than one time signature found in the *Fantasia on the name BACH*, which leaves the music with literally no sense of metre is found in the *Canzonetta* of the *Variations* (Ex. 4.57). Where only one time signature is in evidence, the grouping of notes continues to provide ambiguity as to where the important beats of the bar lie, which is particularly evident in the *Toccata* of both the *Variations* and the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*.

Ex. 4.56: *Sonata No.3* Opus 27 – movement 3, bars 16 to 21



Ex. 4.57: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Canzonetta*, bars 9 to 11



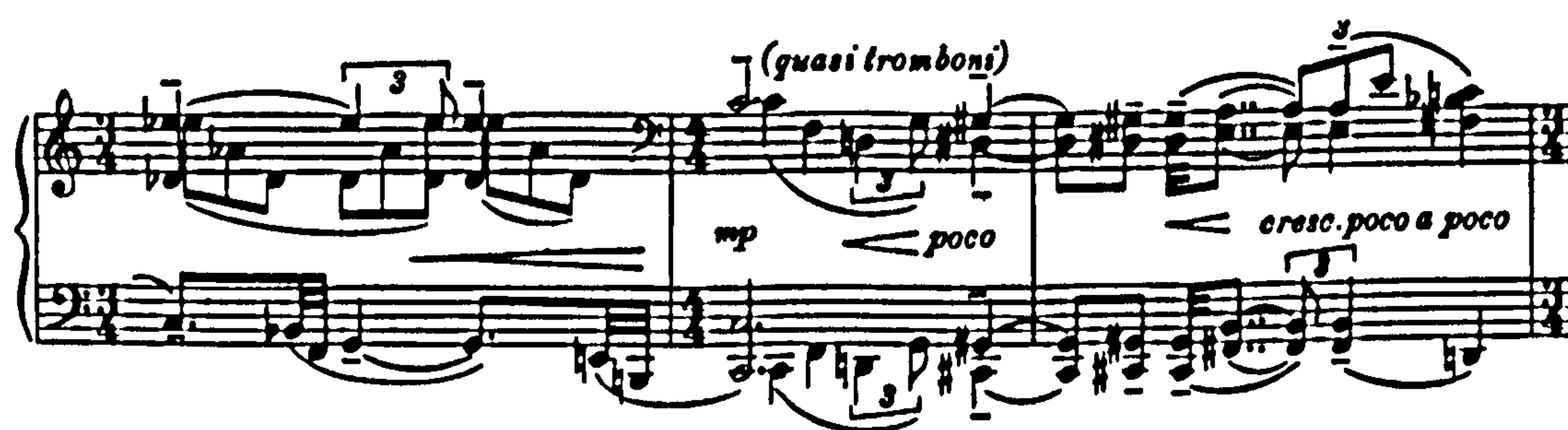
The new textures found in each of these five works for solo piano provide some of Leighton's most innovative writing for the instrument so far. As expected, textures change frequently and substantially, with much variation avoiding any possibility of monotony. The usual pattern of an accumulation in the density of textures runs parallel with the frequent increases in tension towards each climax and subsequent resolution that are now a potent feature of Leighton's musical style.

The varied textures of the *Five Studies* demonstrate an almost fully developed confidence in his own composing abilities and belief in his emerging personal language. Perhaps adopted more from his chamber and orchestral works, the inclusion of the melody within the middle



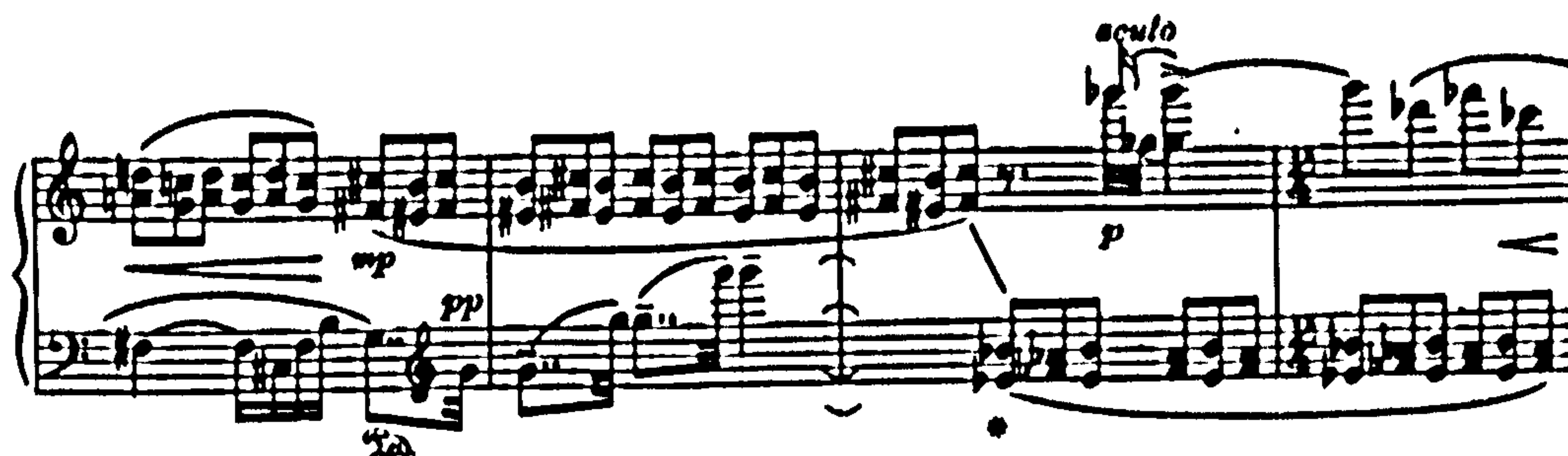
of a full texture as in the opening study of the *Five Studies*, demands a certain level of playing standard not seen before. A large and orchestral-like palette in the piano textures is a growing feature in general, and increasingly Leighton has to employ three staves within his piano music – particularly evident in the *Sonata No. 3*. Evidence of Leighton's thinking in an orchestral manner in his compositions for piano is supplied by the *quasi tromboni* section in the *Introduzione* of the *Variations* (Ex. 4.58). Particularly in the *Variations*, being based on a note-row, chords themselves are made up of intervals and notes found in the note-row, such as the final chord of the *Interludio* and the soft chords towards the end of the *Fanfara* (see Ex. 4.45).

Ex. 4.58: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Introduzione*, bars 9 to 11



The reversing of roles between right and left hands is found in a significant number of examples, each hand adopting the other's part or texture, in a quick transformation; this is a strong technique for maximising the potential of musical material. For the first time, in the *Notturmo* of the *Variations* – and just prior to an exchange of roles between the two hands – Leighton allows the two hands to cross over briefly to aid the transition of textures between right and left hands (Ex. 4.59).

Ex. 4.59: *Variations for Piano* Opus 30 – *Notturmo*, bars 16 to 19



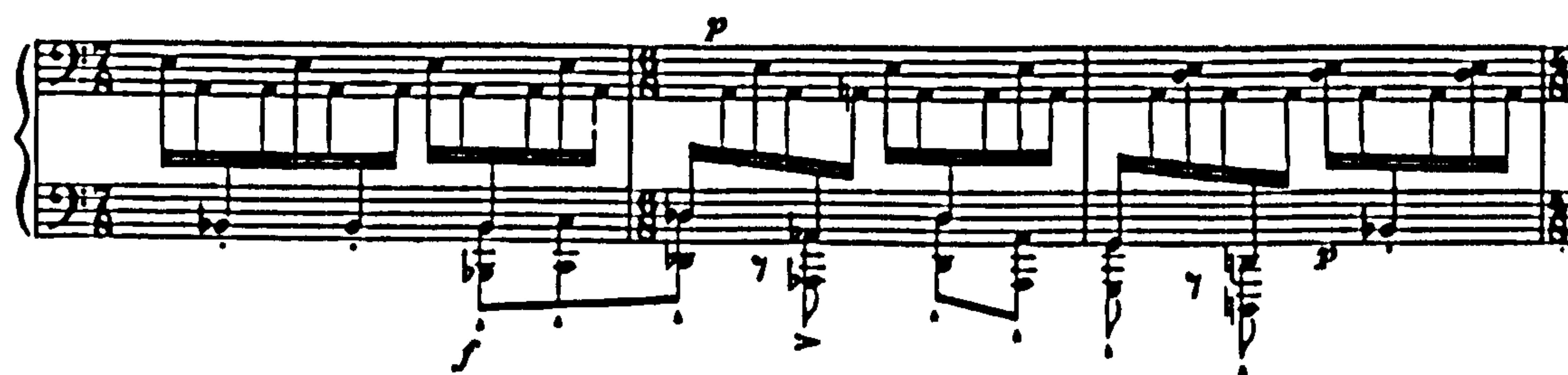
Within such reversal of roles between the right and left hands the use of these oscillating figures is typical – the second movement of *Winter Scenes (The Wind)* provides a prime example of a frequent exchange of the semiquaver figure. An opportunity for contrasts is found within Leighton's textures, with more frequent occasions of using the pedal to accumulate a somewhat blurred texture – this contrast is used in the rhythmic *Toccata* of the *Variations*, which switches between short sections of *con Ped.* and *senza Ped.* that maximises the effect of both the dry and more indistinct textures. In contrast to this quick and rhythmical movement, the following *Notturmo* is marked *sempre col Ped.*

Leighton's *Toccata* movements are amongst the most forward-looking and innovative of the new features at this point in his developing musical style, and there are three contained within these five solo piano works – in the *Five Studies*, the *Variations* and the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*. While presenting new challenges in terms of virtuosity they are indicative of the intensely rhythmical techniques that are required in the performance of Leighton's music, as well as of complexity within his work. This intricacy that grows out of a simple recurring figure is found manifested in the irregular patterns within the melodic material that interrupts a rapid repetitive style and the extensive use of syncopation (Ex. 4.60). There are more innovative features to be found within the piano music; perhaps the most



noticeable of these is a brief experiment in the harmonics of the piano found at the conclusion of the *Fanfara* in the *Variations* – a chord made up of seconds and fourths is played without sounding, but held down, and then the same chord, an octave lower, is played *staccatissimo* and loudly with no pedal creating an unusual series of harmonics as well as an unusual and thin nuance, as the notes of the silently held down chord are made to sound. The opening of the *Fanfara* also provides an unusual piano effect, with the chromatic shift in the three-note chords of the opening.

Ex. 4.60: *Fantasia Contrappuntistica for Piano* Opus 24 – bars 30 to 32

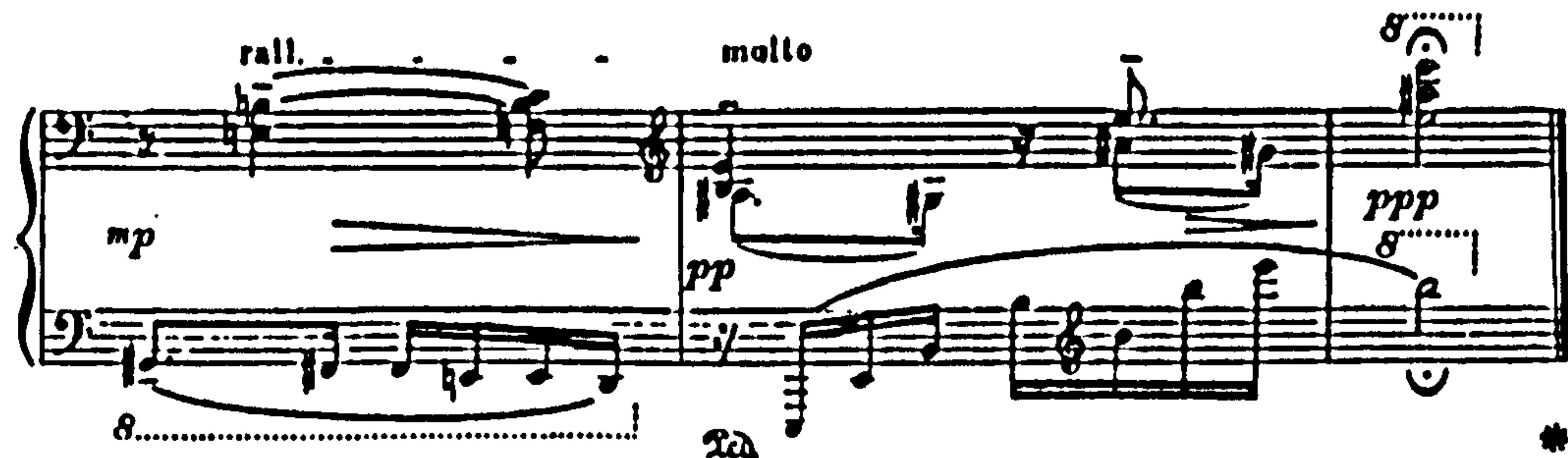


Within all of the five works for piano in this section, Leighton increasingly chooses not to resolve the final cadence of movements on to a root position chord; this instils a sense of anticipation, however each work or movement does not necessarily seem incomplete as a result. Where the final chord does include a resolution onto a root position chord, more often than not the third is missing and bare fifths only remain. Of the *Five Studies*, only the final movement resolves onto a root position tonic chord at the final cadence; of the four remaining studies three finish with unresolved chords, and the fourth resolves once again onto bare fifths only (Ex. 4.61).

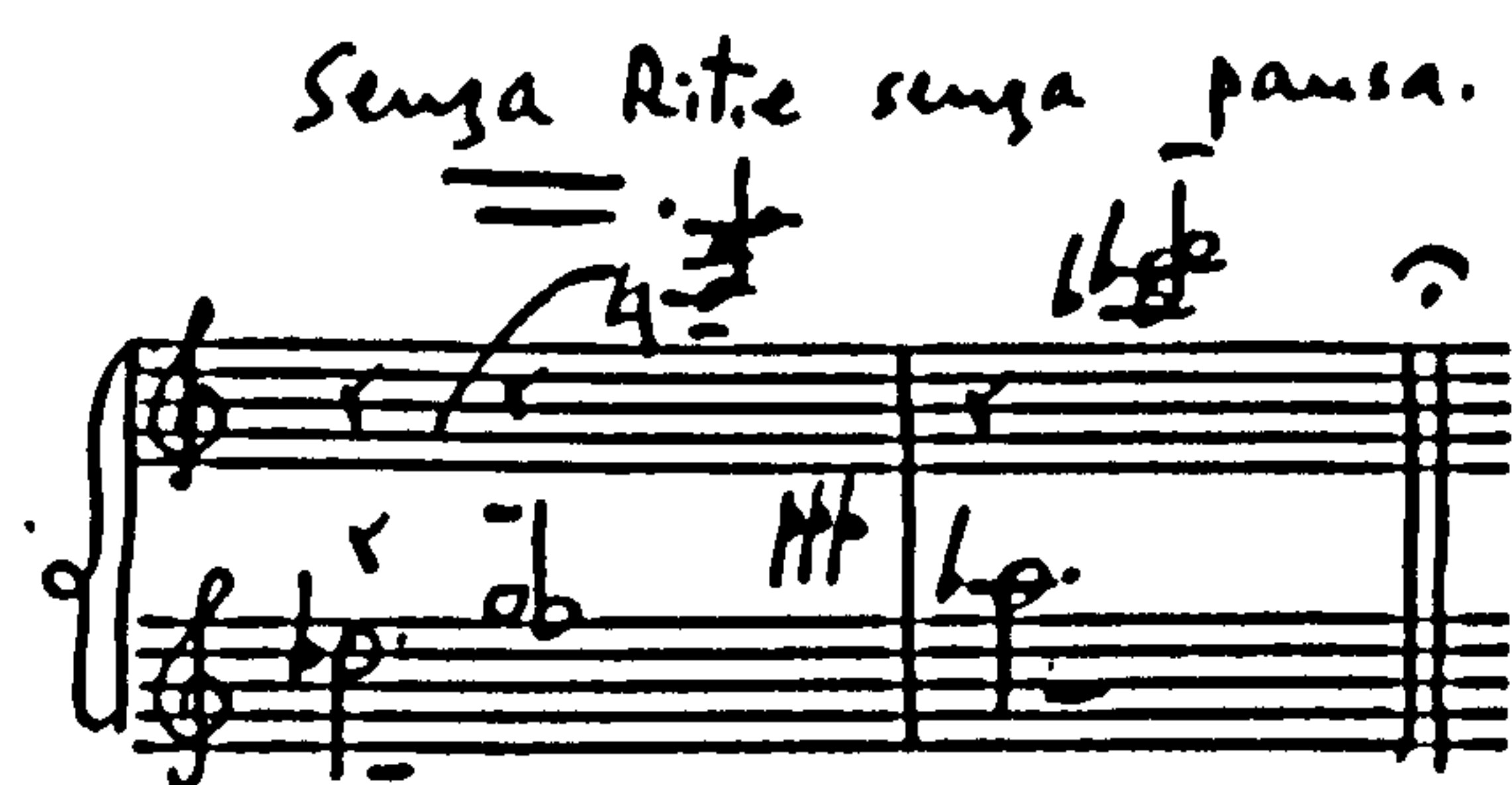
*Winter Scenes* breaks the pattern slightly, with three of the seven movements resolving onto a root position chord which includes the third, although three movements conclude with just

bare fifths at the final chord, and only one of the movements (*Woodsprites*) remains unresolved at its conclusion (Ex. 4.62).

Ex. 4.61: *Five Studies for Piano* Opus 22 – fourth study, bars 57 to 59



Ex. 4.62: *Winter Scenes Suite for Piano* (1953) – *Woodsprites*, bars 75 to 76



In the *Sonata No. 3*, the use of root position final chords, that occur almost randomly in the first and second movements, seems to emphasise the lack of tonal language within the work; the final chord of the work itself is a unison A, and the third movement (*Intermezzo*) ends on an unresolved chord. In the subsequent *Variations*, however eight of the nine variations conclude on an unresolved chord, and the remaining one resolves to bare fifths only. In the final work from this period, *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, there are similarly no resolutions onto root position chords at the ends of the movements, with each movement continuing straight into the next one.



## Choral Music

At this stage within his career, Leighton was not known as a composer of choral music. This period of composition however, was to see him write his first works for this genre that were to be published, each being taken on by Novello. Each academic year of his time in Leeds saw the composition of one of the three works to be studied in this section – *A Christmas Carol* (1953), *The Birds* Opus 28 (1954) and the *Three Carols* Opus 25 (1956). Each also represents a substantially different scoring: voices with organ accompaniment; voices with two pianos, celesta, cymbal and timpani (or strings and piano); and *a capella* voices respectively.

There are a number of links, contrasts and developments to be observed between the earlier *Veris Gratia Cantata* Opus 6 and the substantially more mature work *The Birds* – however, direct links with earlier works were becoming more tenuous over time. Both works are pastoral in style and formed of a similar number of movements, and also not dissimilar in terms of their scale and limited scoring. The use of a chorus and a soloist is similar, with different scoring for each movement – the soloist (soprano in *The Birds* as opposed to tenor in *Veris Gratia*) is, however, more integrated with the choir in the later work rather than in separate movements, and while there are two unaccompanied movements in the *Birds* there are no movements without the chorus as in the earlier cantata.

There are more similarities, mostly due to the scale of the works, between *A Christmas Carol* and the *Three Carols*, than with the larger scale choral suite *The Birds*, but there are aspects which each of the three works have in common, particularly in the area of word painting.

This, in the majority of cases is supported by a keen sense of speech rhythm. These important traits can be traced back to the early influence of choral music from his time as a chorister as well as Leighton's interest in song-writing and poetry.

The techniques used by Leighton for word emphasis are particularly advanced. He did not subscribe to the one note to one syllable technique used by composers such as Gerald Finzi; however, his use of melisma within word painting is also particularly selective. The melisma on the word 'sweeter' at the unaccompanied opening of *A Christmas Carol*, and a few bars later at 'sing', are prime examples of this technique in its most obvious form, and reminiscent of the opening section of *Sing Lullaby* by Herbert Howells (Ex. 4.63i & ii).

Ex. 4.63i: *A Christmas Carol* Opus 21 – bars 1 to 7

Moderate con moto, un poco liberamente

SOPRANO  
What sweeter music can we bring, Then a

ALTO  
What sweeter music can we bring, Then a

TENOR  
What sweeter music can we bring, Then a

BASS  
What sweeter music can we bring, Then a

Car-oll, for to sing The Birth of this our heaven-ly

Car-oll, for to sing The Birth of this our heaven-ly

Car-oll, for to sing The Birth of this our heaven-ly

Car-oll, for to sing The Birth, the Birth of this our heaven-ly



**Ex. 4.63ii: *Sing Lullaby* by Herbert Howells – bars 1 to 3**

Non troppo lento, e sempre tranquillo

**SOPRANO**  
Sing— lei . . la - by, — Sing— lei .

**ALTO**  
Sing— lei . . la - by, — Sing— lei .

**TENOR**  
Sing— lei . . la - by, — Sing— lei .

**BASS**  
Sing lei . la-by, —

Further word painting in *A Christmas Caroll* demonstrates that it does not have to be confined to a specific word within the text, but can be anticipated and built up gradually over time, as in the following phrase, which grows in dynamics and accompaniment texture while rising in pitch towards the word 'Awake!' (Ex. 4.64).

**Ex. 4.64: *A Christmas Caroll* Opus 21 – bars 15 to 17**

The image displays a musical score for a four-part vocal setting of "The Lord's Prayer." The score is written on five staves. The first four staves are for the vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each vocal line begins with the lyrics "Eye, and ev - 'ry thing A - woe!" and is marked with a "cresc." (crescendo) and a "f" (forte) dynamic. The piano accompaniment is on the fifth staff, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music is in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

In the remaining carols from this period, *The Star-song* Opus 25a and *An ode on the birth of our Saviour* Opus 25c (*Lully, lulla thou little tiny child* Opus 25b was composed as a student and part of the original *Three Carols* of 1948), there are also a number of examples of the

importance of word painting. In the second phrase of *The Star-song*, a response to the poetry of Robert Herrick can be seen at 'lately', which, with the use of melisma, breaks the pattern of the carol to that point, which makes use of one note for each syllable (Ex. 4.65). He can also be seen to realise the punctuation of the text in accordance with speech rhythm at the words 'or say', by using a quaver rest immediately afterwards to represent a comma (Ex. 4.66).

Ex. 4.65: *A Star-song* Opus 25c – bars 6 to 10

Ex. 4.66: *A Star-song* Opus 25c – bars 11 to 15

The use of the melisma is still selective within these works, this technique actually becoming even more sparing as time goes on; the first of only a few examples of melisma in the first and third carol is found combined with a sumptuous harmony at the word 'sleep' in the opening bars of *The Star-song*. *An ode on the birth of our Saviour* is the closest Leighton gets to

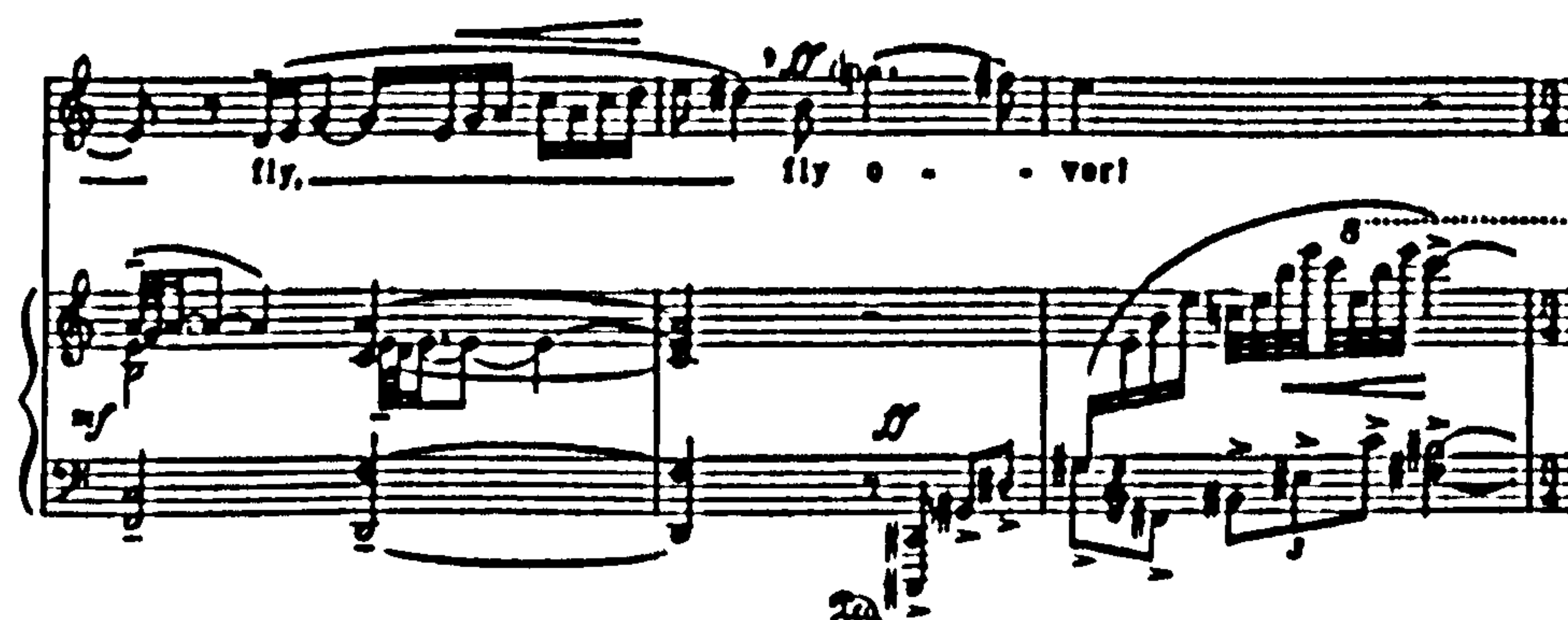


one note to one syllable in these works, with only one or two uses of melisma placed subtly within the lower voices of the choral texture and slightly staggered delivery of the words in the four parts; a mixture of these two techniques is found in the second of four sections of this carol at the word 'Roses'.

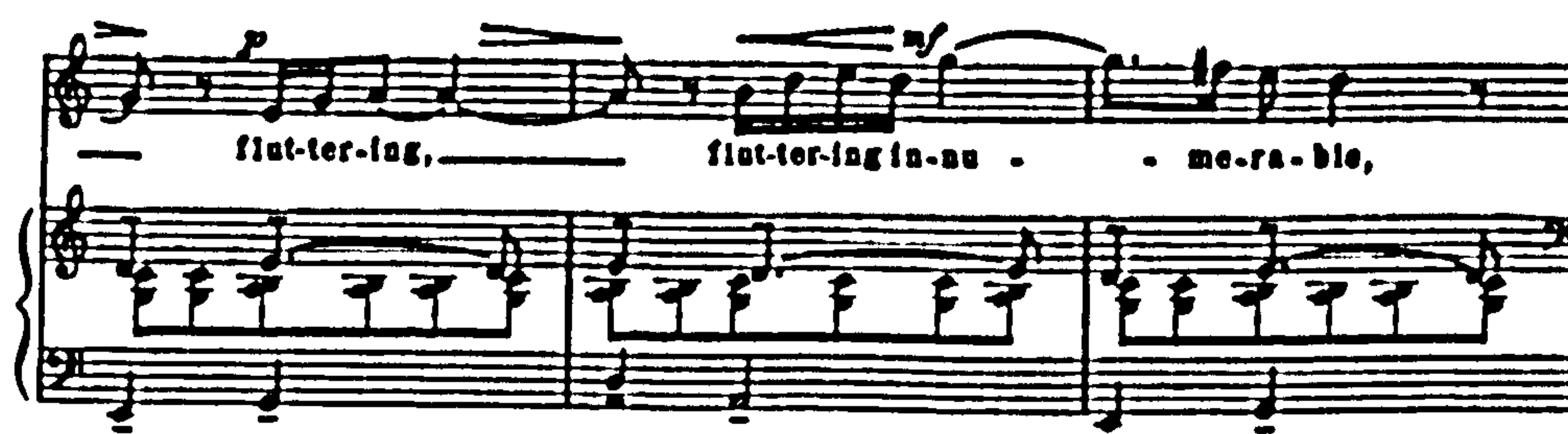
The descriptive and vivid nature of the texts used in the choral suite *The Birds* allows Leighton the most opportunities for word painting. Each of the eight movements sees him at perhaps his most evocative in response to the poetry of the seven poets represented in this work. In *The Birds* as a whole, he demonstrates that he is willing to be led and inspired by the texts of the poets and the mood of each particular piece in a thoroughly considered way. In the re-scored version for strings, piano and *ad lib.* percussion from a year later, the strings adopt most of the sustained and chordal writing, while the more continuous and percussive writing (including that of the celesta) is retained or adopted by the piano.

It is clear that Leighton chose his texts particularly carefully, with sufficient variation in mood between each to allow a balanced structure and mood to the work as a whole and with many opportunities for expressive writing in a number of different characters. An early example of word painting in *The Birds* can be seen on 'fly', in an expressive rising melisma in the opening soprano solo section (Ex. 4.67). Further on into this movement more examples can clearly be seen at 'fluttering' (Ex.4.68i), 'smoothly' and the repetition up a fifth of the word 'up' (Ex. 4.68ii).

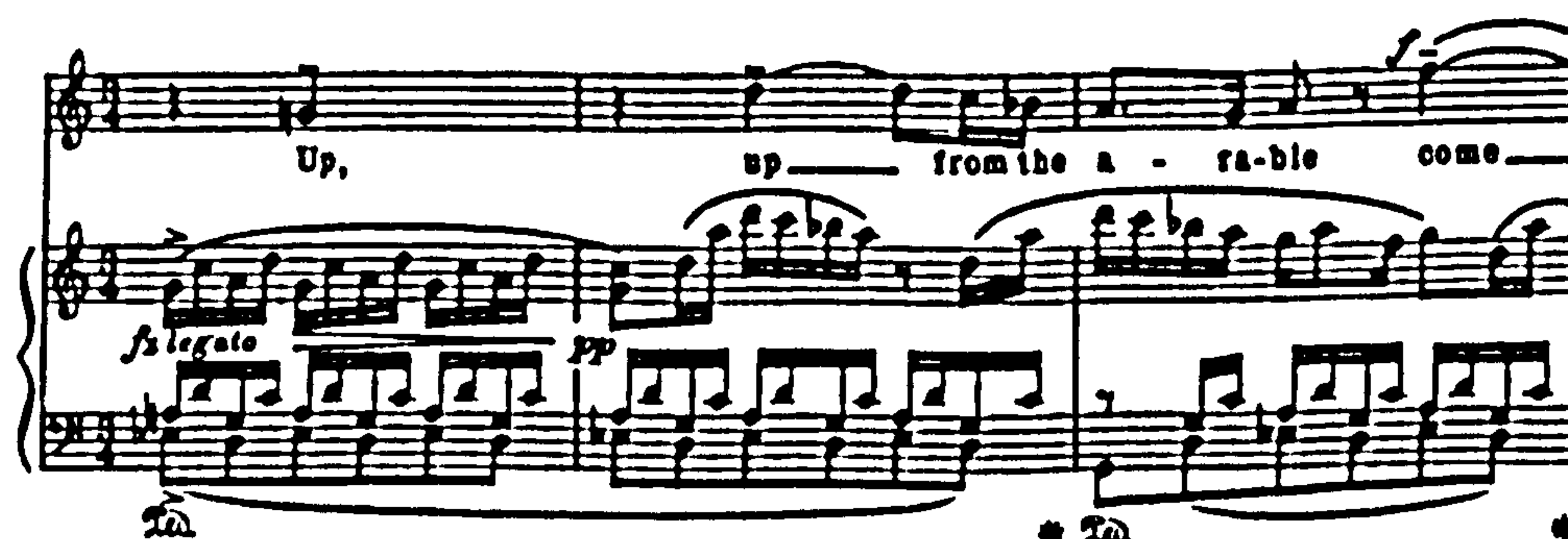
Ex. 4.67: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Invocation* bars 7 to 9



Ex. 4.68i: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Invocation* bars 20 to 22



Ex. 4.68ii: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Invocation* bars 26 to 28



The second movement, *The Robin*, is one of the shortest movements and continues the word painting from the opening bars, Leighton demonstrating an ability to quickly change the mood as required. The movement begins with a quiet sustained and reflective ascending line from the sopranos and altos that is echoed by the tenors and basses; the mood changes at bar eight, the text 'And a happy bird am I' is highlighted with a short cheerful tune that is treated imitatively between the sopranos and the rest of the choir (Ex. 4.69).



**Ex. 4.69: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Robin* bars 5 to 14**

see in pools the shi - ling - sky, And a hap - py bird Am -

see in pools the shi - ling - sky, And a

see in pools the shi - ling - sky, And a

see in pools the shi - ling - sky, And a

I, And a hap - py bird Am - I, am I, am II

hap - py bird Am - I, And a hap - py bird Am - I, am II

hap - py bird Am - I, And a hap - py bird Am - I, am I, am

hap - py bird Am - I, And a hap - py bird Am - I, am

The momentum is checked, with a return to a sustained texture at 'I stand, and look', eventually increasing a little to draw attention to the onomatopoeic and rhyming nature of 'And chink and prink'. The atmosphere is changed entirely with the text 'When winter frost Makes earth as steel': this is accompanied by bleak and sparse textures again treated imitatively, the slight chromatic quality of the theme and the following counterpoint increasing the overall effect. The desolate quality continues, with a slight respite at the words 'I get to feel no grief at all', which is followed by a return to the darker mood, left unresolved at the words 'For I turn into a cold stiff/Feathery ball!' The representation of the owl call at 'Te whit, te whoo' in the fourth movement, *Sweet Suffolk Owle*, is made by the rising fourth figure used in canon, which is suggestive of an echo effect of the single owl following the preceding text of 'Thou sing'st alone' (Ex. 4.70). In further support of the

night atmosphere present in *Sweet Suffolk Owle*, the sparse vocal scoring and use of the celesta (in the original version) are important elements.

Ex. 4.70: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Sweet Suffolk Owle* bars 15 to 18

The musical score for 'Sweet Suffolk Owle' bars 15 to 18 is presented in five systems. The first two systems are vocal staves with lyrics. The third and fourth systems are piano staves. The fifth system consists of two staves for the celesta accompaniment.

Vocal parts (Soprano and Alto):

Soprano: Te whit, to whoo, Te whoo, to whoo!

Alto: whoo! Te whit, to whoo, to whoo, to whoo!

Piano parts:

Left Hand: lone, a - lone

Right Hand: lone, a - lone

The celesta accompaniment features a continuous semiquaver movement and sustained chords.

The seventh movement, *The Eagle*, is the most dramatic of all, with perhaps the most arresting of the instrumental accompaniments: double-dotted rhythms and crashing dissonant chords are just two of the descriptive elements of this bird of prey that demand the listener's attention, especially following the soft ending of the previous movement. A clear image of flight is supplied by the cascading nature of the opening, with diminution followed by a soaring glissando high on the piano, stating its arrival with a vociferous chord (Ex 4.71). Word painting is inevitably found in this movement, with bold imagery at 'He clasps the crag with crooked hands' (see Ex. 4.71) before settling into continuous semiquaver movement and sustained chords in the accompaniment (Ex. 4.72).



Ex. 4.71: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Eagle* bars 1 to 7

Lento maestoso 3/8

PIANO *p* sempre acuto

1 2

SOPRANO *ff* declamato e molto accentuato *acuto*

ALTO *ff* declamato e molto accentuato *acuto*

TENOR *ff* declamato e molto accentuato *acuto*

BASS *ff* declamato e molto accentuato *acuto*

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;

Ex. 4.72: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Eagle* bars 8 to 9

*mf legato*

Close to the sun in lonely

*mf legato*

Close to the sun in lonely

*mf legato*

Close to the sun in lonely

*mf legato*

Close to the sun in lonely

*dim.*

The use of dynamics to dramatic effect can also be seen in *The Eagle*, with a *pianissimo* at 'He watches from his mountain walls' being disturbed suddenly with a *subito fortissimo* at 'And like a thunderbolt he falls' at the conclusion of the movement.

Texture is also used as a tool to enhance word painting, with both homophonic and contrapuntal writing effectively contributing to the realisation of imagery contained in the poetry. Like melisma, counterpoint is particularly selectively used. While occurring with increasing frequency and over extended periods in other genres, he appears to be aware that his own rather complex style of counterpoint applied to choral writing might be obstructive in the delivery of a text, and not wholly appropriate on many occasions. As in Leighton's instrumental writing, points of climax see the various parts join together with an increased impact, homophonic texture being a much more useful tool at this point. Also, Leighton may be thinking of the singers in a work such as this; too much counterpoint might become dense, tiresome and difficult to approach in a choral situation. Leighton's response is to have only limited periods of counterpoint and those only when appropriate to the text at that moment.

There are, however, a number of examples of counterpoint being used to effect word painting; this is not to say, though, that Leighton uses it only for this purpose, and it is clear that he is also considering a balance of textures throughout in its measured use. In the opening *Invocation* movement of *The Birds* the words 'Flock upon flock' is neatly illustrated by canonic entries, followed by bitonal writing. A similar example is to be found in the sixth movement, *The Linnet*, where the rising figure at 'Flutters a thing' is stated by the sopranos and altos and echoed by the lower voices of the chorus. The imitative entries of the chorus in *The Eagle*, working inwards to the middle of the choir above the majestic accompaniment, are used to portray the eagle being 'Ring'd with the azure world'. The most notable use of counterpoint not linked to word painting occurs in the final movement, *The Hymn of the*



**Ex. 4.73: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Sweet Suffolk Owle* bars 28 to 33**

[illegible]

**Ex. 4.74: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Hymn of the Birds* bars 214 to 221**

birds, \_\_\_\_\_ from us birds. \_\_\_\_\_

— from us birds, \_\_\_\_\_ from us birds. \_\_\_\_\_

us birds, \_\_\_\_\_ come from us \_\_\_\_\_ birds. \_\_\_\_\_

— from us birds, \_\_\_\_\_ from us birds. \_\_\_\_\_

*allegro.*

There are further links to Leighton's early songs in his choral music; the form is mostly determined to some extent by the structure of the poem – strophic and through-composed formats are often dictated by the number of stanzas and the length of each stanza. Increasingly Leighton opts to use a through-composed structure that is clearly separated into sections that correspond to the number of stanzas in the poetry – even in one case (*The Robin*) changing the order of the verses slightly. *A Christmas Carol*, with a number of stanzas in the original poem of varying length, has a through-composed form determined by its strong link to word painting. The final movement of *The Birds* (*The Hymn of the Birds*), however, is one long stanza, its through-composition once again being determined by the structure of the poetry, while the opening movement is through-composed with a recurring refrain ('Tio') between each verse. The remainder of the movements in *The Birds* are also through-composed, with separations into verses where there is more than one stanza.

The *Star-Song* from the *Three carols* contains this through-composed structure, although separated into clear sections, while *An ode on the birth of our Saviour* appears at first to be a modified strophic structure, until the third and fourth verses are seen to be individual - the second verse is a homophonic harmonisation of the first verse sung by solo soprano. The shape of phrases used in Leighton's choral writing is supported by a wide range of dynamics, once again responsive to the text. Combined with this, emphasis on the most important words is most often found at the peak of the phrase.

A noticeable advance in Leighton's skills is found in the flow between one texture and the next in a seamless and more natural fashion, and is inevitably linked with a similar improved



subtlety in the introduction of, and transition between, musical ideas. This is particularly pertinent in *The Birds*, where the question of cyclical elements and unity in a work of this scale is always present. As with other large-scale works, Leighton appears to have embraced the fact that the cyclical effect does not have to be so significant and obvious. With improved structural skills, he is able to put cyclical elements to use in more unexpected and less frequent ways, often fragmented and almost subliminal.

These three features of texture, introduction and development of musical ideas, and cyclical qualities have now become combined together in Leighton's technique and, supported by this greater confidence and ability to construct a musical work, inevitably lead to a more honed and polished sense of musical economy. Cyclical elements can now be gained from something as small as a rising interval, such as in the opening *Invocation* of *The Birds*, where the rising fifth of the first phrase of the soprano part recurs later in the work (Ex. 4.75i & ii).

Ex. 4.75i: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Invocation* bars 1 to 3

Moderato (♩ = 80) ma liberamente come recit.

Come one, come all,

*ff un poco liberamente quasi improvvisando*

Ex. 4.75ii: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Linnet* bars 38 to 41

un poco agitato accel.

*fervore*

— Did to one bird, to one bird be-long, —

*fervore*

grace Did to one bird, to one bird be-long, —

un poco agitato accel.

*fervore*

— Did to one bird, to one bird be-long, —

one, to one bird, to one bird be-long, —

The striking opening of *The Birds* is also found in a paraphrased version near the conclusion in *The Hymn of the Birds*. Economy is also achieved by giving an arch-like shape to the structure on occasion, with textures and ideas returning full-circle after development, such as is found in *The Star-song* – following substantial variation, the opening hushed homophony and mood returns. The opening introduction of the doleful fifth movement of *The Birds (Elegy)* is also heard at the conclusion of the movement.

Leighton's choral textures show an advanced ability for the medium even at this early stage in his composing career and with no previous published choral works. The lyrical quality often found within the vocal lines is derived from his wide and varied practice at setting words to music. The vocal lines themselves can, on occasion, appear to be difficult for a singer, particularly so in *The Birds*, but there is nothing too challenging – secure and coherent vocal lines throughout, that often contain important melodic material, show the security of his harmonic technique, on the whole remaining articulate and adding strength to the overall structure. The spacing of chords within the choir, when either homophonic



or contrapuntal, is vitally important in terms of strength and retaining a lucid sound to the choral texture. Leighton is inventive in this aspect – there are few root position chords and where there are chords that contain only triads, they are mostly found in the first or second inversion, lending an unpredictable element to the music.

While homophony does retain a significant role within Leighton's choral writing, the stage of development reached in comparison with the earlier *Missa Brevis* for example is clear; the earlier work almost wholly relies on a chordal accompaniment to a melody in the soprano line. There is now a strong element of further variation, lucidity and flexibility within the textures. Where basic homophonic writing is used it is generally richer in content, with slight variations in underlay between voices, and with voices not always moving in a simultaneous fashion. The consistency of harmonic content throughout all of the *Three Carols* unites the set, whereas the earlier set containing *Lully, lulla* was not so successful in this respect. *A Christmas Carol* is mostly homophonic throughout, with counterpoint mainly reserved for the final verse, although the chordal style is not necessarily straightforward and hymn-like in its delivery, with much parallel movement (see Ex. 4.63i). Where imitative writing is a feature of Leighton's music, the pairing of voices (either upper voices against lower voices, or soprano with tenor and alto with bass) is an important component of his musical language and there are examples of this technique in both *A Christmas Carol* (Ex. 4.76) and *The Birds*.

Ex. 4.76: *A Christmas Carol* Opus 21 – bars 70 to 73

The musical score for Ex. 4.76 consists of four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves are for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are: 'oud-dea, thus, on the oud-dea?'. The piano accompaniment is in the right hand, with a 'dim.' marking at the end.

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, a solo voice (usually a soprano) and choir was to become the preferred scoring in Leighton's carols. In *A Christmas Carol*, Leighton chooses to use a baritone soloist, and, somewhat unusually he does not make use of the full range of the voice: the entire, substantial solo covers only the interval of a sixth. In *The Star-song* and *An ode on the birth of our saviour*, however, the whole range of the soprano soloist is used, allowing new textures to be introduced into the choral writing. The main example of this (particularly apt for these works) has the choir humming underneath the soprano solo line; in a further attempt to unite the three carols this feature could have been inspired by the ostinato of the text 'Lully, lulla', which is found below the soprano line of the earliest carol of the three (Ex. 4.77).



Ex. 4.77: *A Star-song* Opus 25c – bars 58 to 64

più mosso (scorrevole)  
SOPRANO SOLO (The Star) *p*  
No, this ye need not

pp più mosso (scorrevole)  
a (half-closed lips)

pp più mosso (scorrevole)  
a (half-closed lips)

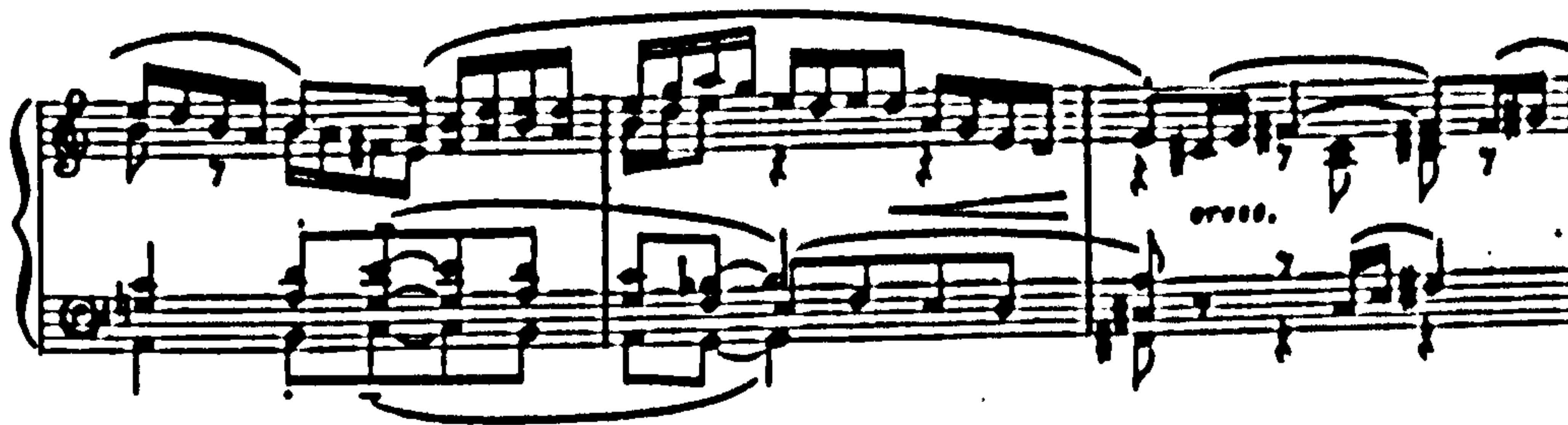
pp più mosso (scorrevole)  
a (half-closed lips)

pp più mosso (scorrevole)  
a (half-closed lips)

In British Church music composed during the first half of the twentieth century, organ parts, in relation to choral parts, were beginning to see a new independence, rather than just doubling of the vocal lines. This separation of organ and choir was epitomised in the music of one his largest influences, Herbert Howells, who had taken organ accompaniment to new levels, particularly in his most recent works for the Church at the time. Leighton chooses to adopt this style of organ accompaniment in his own language, although the influence of piano writing is also evident; a pianistic and long interlude with snippets of fanfare figures and an almost constant semiquaver movement is found in *A Christmas Carol* following the opening verse (Ex. 4.78).

Ex. 4.78: *A Christmas Carol* Opus 21 – bars 21 to 26

più mosso



He is also beginning to show a clear understanding of the possibilities and limitations of writing for the organ – as with much of his solo organ music and accompaniments, he leaves details such as the registration to the discretion of the player, choosing to only occasionally request a specific timbre or a particular part to be brought out in performance.

Leighton's instrumental techniques are being seen to mature in *The Birds* and there is a clear chamber quality to the first and original version of this work (the second version was made a little later in 1955 for publication by Novello for strings piano and *ad lib.* timpani and suspended cymbal). There are some features retained from earlier works; an ostinato figure can be observed in *Invocation*, which develops into a constant semiquaver movement giving momentum to the movement; a repetitive ostinato figure is also a feature of *The Blackbird*. A progression from the use of an ostinato figures to be seen in the more extended passacaglia-like bass in *The Hymn of the Birds* that recurs at various pitches (Ex. 4.79i & ii).

Ex. 4.79i: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Hymn of the Birds* bars 1 to 6



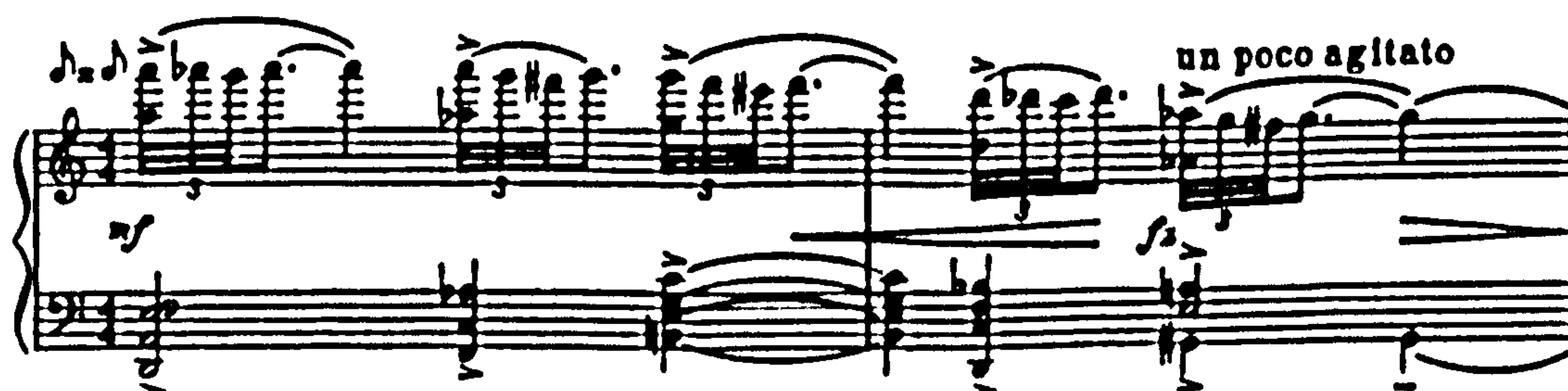


Ex. 4.79ii: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Hymn of the Birds* bars 25 to 31



The increased chromatic movement in Leighton's works shows a major progression; although he does not rely on the sequence as much, when he does employ this tried and tested technique, it becomes less noticeable when combined with close chromatic figures (Ex. 4.80). The chromatic harmony of the accompaniment, particularly in the *Elegy* of *The Birds* leaves a confident uncertainty as to the tonal centre of his writing.

Ex. 4.80: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Elegy* bars 27 to 28



There are a number of textures in common with the chamber works of this period. Oscillating semiquaver figures in the celesta part of the *Elegy* are reminiscent of those found in both the *Fantasia on the Name BACH* and the *String Quartet No. 1* mentioned above. The timpani writing in this work is similar to that of the earlier *Veris Gratia Cantata*, used sparingly and mostly reserved for moments of anticipation and climax.

The most noticeable advance in the choral works of this time is found in Leighton's musical language. There is a new strength and individualism to his style in general; *The Birds* is one of the earliest recognisable works that is representative of his mature style. As was now usual, key signatures are not used in this piece, although the first three verses of *An ode on the birth of our Saviour* are a rare exception – the key is not fixed however and does change. *The Birds* begins with a flourish that could not be labelled with a specific tonic key and there is a free and confident recitative style to the work (Ex. 4.81). While there are a wide number of keys within his choral works Leighton can be seen not to change key as often as in his instrumental works. A certain consciousness about the abilities of the majority of choirs probably determines this aspect of his choral music; awkward shifts of key are also avoided, probably due his awareness of musical line within his choral textures.

Ex. 4.81: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Invocation* bars 1 to 6

Moderato (♩ = 80) ma liberamente come recit.

SOLO

PIANO

*ff un poco liberamente quasi improvvisando*

Come one, come all,

my feathered folk, fly, fly, fly,

*accel.* *a tempo* *mf liberamente*



There are a number of other features that are used selectively within all these choral works; these include the use of dissonance, syncopation, cross-rhythms, two simultaneous time-signatures and disjunct writing. Leighton takes care to use these techniques appropriately in setting words to music. An aspect of his treatment of dissonance is seen in the number of phrases (and movements within *The Birds*) that remain unresolved. This technique in particular leaves a sense of anticipation and tension within Leighton's writing and it becomes increasingly characteristic with time. Particularly in homophonic writing, this unresolved quality transforms the music from being a series of cadences to being more naturally progressive and articulate as a whole. The most noticeable example of this is found in *Sweet Suffolk Owle*, in which the final chord is made up of all the notes of the owl call heard as a refrain throughout the movement (Ex. 4.82). An ambiguity of metre is manifested in the use of more than one time signature and the blurring of bar lines within the grouping of notes (Ex. 4.83). Aside from the use of keyless writing the ambiguity of key is enhanced with the use of bare fifths, as at the conclusion of *A Christmas Caroll*.

Ex. 4.82: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *Sweet Suffolk Owle* bars 52 to 57

The musical score for 'Sweet Suffolk Owle' from 'The Birds' Opus 28, bars 52 to 57, is presented for four voices and piano. The lyrics are 'To whoo, to whoo, to wheel'. The music is marked 'poco rall.' and features a 'lunga pausa' (long pause) at the end of each phrase. The piano accompaniment consists of sustained chords.

Ex. 4.83: *The Birds* Opus 28 – *The Blackbird* bars 1 to 8

Allegro con brio  
SOPRANO

ALTO

Allegro con brio J. = a. 132  
PIANO

In midst of woods or pleasant

In midst of woods or pleasant

### Concertos

There are three works entitled 'concerto' from this period, one of which is scored for soloist and strings only (*Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23), one for strings and timpani (*Concerto for Two Pianos and String Orchestra with Timpani* Opus 26) and only one for soloist and full orchestra (*Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31). In looking at Leighton's concertos – and concerto-like works – up until this point the scoring for strings appears to be his preferred combination. Even later on in his career, when composing his concerto for organ in 1970, he chose the same orchestration as the organ concerto by Francis Poulenc (with strings and timpani); in his concerto for recorder (or flute) and harpsichord, composed in 1982, the accompaniment – more than likely out of necessity of balance – is



again restricted to strings. Each of the concertos for solo piano however is for full orchestra.

Leighton gives a substantial insight into the structure and main features of his *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* in the following programme note:

The work attempts to exploit the lyrical possibilities of the solo instrument by means of extended melodies based on key intervals. This is at once apparent at the start of the movement. The 'cello enters in the second bar with a tune of which the opening, rhythmic and intervallic shape becomes the central idea of the design. The orchestra takes this up in notes of shorter value, and leads to a more rhythmic and energetic section, in which the more athletic possibilities of the solo instrument are exploited. The excitement of this soon dies down, however, to make way for the second main subject – a slower tune of which the first four notes are thematically important and which is characterized by the leap of a major seventh. The extended development which follows contrasts and combines these two main subjects, culminating in an orchestral climax and a cadenza, part of which is accompanied. In the recapitulation that follows attention is claimed first by the rhythmic version of the first subject, but soon the tempo slackens into a final meditation on the 'motto-theme', ending quietly on a chord which prepares us for the tonality of the *Scherzo*.<sup>31</sup>

Leighton continued his analysis of the concerto with this description of the second movement (*Scherzo and Trio*):

This movement is gay and exuberant, and the soloist leads off with both the main themes. The brass also contribute a subsidiary idea shortly after the opening. The Trio *Moderato dolce* beginning with an oboe solo is, by contrast, of a lyrical nature. After this the material of the *Scherzo* is elaborated and brought to a climax by the full orchestra.<sup>32</sup>

The concluding section of Leighton's programme note describes the third and final movement:

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<sup>31</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra Opus 31*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

The emotional climax of the work (as in the composer's Violin Concerto) comes in the slow final movement, which uses material related to that of the first movement. The opening leap of a minor ninth on the 'cello, immediately contradicted by the drop of a whole tone, is an important thematic element. Oboe, flute, then 'cello successively play the second subject, and there is an impassioned orchestral climax in the centre of the movement.<sup>33</sup>

Leighton's advances in musical language, which are most notable in *The Birds* and in the solo piano works of this time, are evident in his concertos too, although a little more muted: these substantial canvases evidently did not provide the same concentrated opportunities for experimentation with his compositional style as did his works for piano. From the opening of the *Concerto for Oboe and Strings*, there is a different outlook: while some of the pastoral qualities of earlier orchestral works are still present, the youthful exuberance of those works composed in Rome and Deal has now been transformed into an emotionally charged energy, with a greater sense of tension and conflict to be considered and resolved in the music. The same assertion of the arrival of Leighton's maturing personal style and harmonic and rhythmic language found at the openings of works such as the *The Birds* and the *Five Studies*, is found in the *Concerto for Two Pianos*. This work is texturally, harmonically – and in terms of virtuosity – developed to a similar level as that found in the *Five Studies*. The challenges represented by this concerto, and the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* that follows, show no apprehension on Leighton's part in demanding a great deal in search for the desired final result. Challenges are to be found in ensemble, with an increase in the use of syncopation and a more general growth in complexity than in his pervading works of this time. The sheer scale is growing constantly, the oboe concerto being c. 20 minutes in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



length, the two-piano concerto 21 minutes and the sizeable score for the cello concerto providing around 35 minutes of music.

This new-found level of complexity within Leighton's music is mostly achieved by an increasing reliance on contrapuntal techniques. The oboe concerto is the first of Leighton's orchestral scores to rely on this escalation in the number of individual lines within his textures. These can range from a series of imitative entries (Ex. 4.84) to more extensive sections of counterpoint between two or more instruments (Ex. 4.85).

Ex. 4.84: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 1, bars 9 to 12

Ex. 4.85: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 1, bars 57 to 60

At times the combining of themes can also create counterpoint, such as in the first movement of the two-piano concerto at bar 152. The density of the counterpoint differs throughout each stage of the three concertos, but there is never a sense of over-complication in the use of these techniques. There is also no strictly fugal writing within these three works, the presence of a soloist perhaps determining this as inappropriate. Contrapuntal lines often weave within each other, creating dissonance as in the first movement of the oboe concerto, where the oboe and first violin demonstrate this feature from bar 58 (see Ex. 4.85). Where two-part counterpoint exists it is often accompanied by a sustained or chordal texture either above or below, though it is also sometimes found unaccompanied.

Interplay between soloist and orchestra is enhanced within the counterpoint – in the slow movement of the oboe concerto a section of three-part imitative counterpoint at the very opening of the movement between the oboe, then cello and violins creates a conversation. There are many opportunities for conversing between instruments in the concerto for two pianos, with much dense counterpoint and an exploitation of the antiphonal capabilities of the two similar solo instruments. In this concerto, there is much unison writing in octaves within each piano part, adding a clarity and impact to the individual lines presented and bringing them out of the overall texture (Ex. 4.86). Counterpoint is a major part of the cello concerto also and a modified version of the opening cello theme in the first movement is presented in counterpoint with the first bassoon above a repetitive *pizzicato* rhythm in the basses (Ex. 4.87).



Ex. 4.86: *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26 – movement 1, bars 62 to 66

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 4.86, which is a section from the *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26, movement 1, bars 62 to 66. The score is written for four staves: Strings (top), Timpani (TYP.), Piano I (PIANO I), and Piano II (PIANO II). The music is highly complex, featuring many notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The strings play a rhythmic pattern, while the timpani and pianos have more melodic and harmonic parts. The overall texture is dense and intricate.

Ex. 4.87: *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 – movement 1, bars 1 to 4

The image shows a musical score for Ex. 4.87, which is a section from the *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31, movement 1, bars 1 to 4. The score is written for two staves: Violoncello (top) and Piano (bottom). The tempo is marked "Allegro con moto" with a metronome marking of  $\text{♩} = 120-126$ . The Violoncello part is marked "cantando" and "acuto e sempre simile". The Piano part is marked "pp ritmico" and "p espress.". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The overall style is classical and expressive.

The use of serial techniques can be observed but, in much the same way as in the *Five Studies*, tonality is the most important factor in the harmonic make-up of these three concertos, while there is no one specific key throughout each. While in the opening section of the oboe concerto the key changes every two or three bars, creating a rich, unpredictable

and constantly fresh-sounding harmonic idiom, tonality remains the overriding factor. The oboe in its opening phrases states 11 of the 12 notes of a note-row, while in the second movement the opening theme heard in the oboe states a stricter note-row with no repetition. The concerto for two pianos, however, does not immediately present a note-row at its opening, the first and obvious statement of one occurring in the two pianos between bars 17 and 19, and not used further in a strict serial manner. The second and third movements of the same concerto see note-rows presented near the opening. Leighton's melodic material is clearly being influenced by serial methods and, while this material remains a constant presence being developed and regularly recycled, this appears to be the limit of its use within these works.

The use of form is traditional within these three concertos. Sonata form is important, as is an ABA structure – most specifically in the *Scherzo and Trio* of the cello concerto – and an arch-shape. It seems that while Leighton does not experiment harmonically and texturally on larger canvases, a similar rule applies for the use of form, keeping a freer structure for works such as the *Variations for Piano* Opus 30. For the introduction of new themes the scoring is understandably reduced, allowing for a clear statement of a new subject, while also defining the sections of each movement. In other works by Leighton the usual pattern is that the second subject of a movement, while often related to the first, provides a contrast and a respite from the intensity or exuberance of a movement; these works are no exception. With variation sections directly following the exposition of a subject (and before the development section proper) this contrast is heightened. The playful and mischievous *Scherzo* third movement of the oboe concerto provides an example of this, the energy of the



opening and the dynamic being substantially reduced following an intense climax early in the movement.

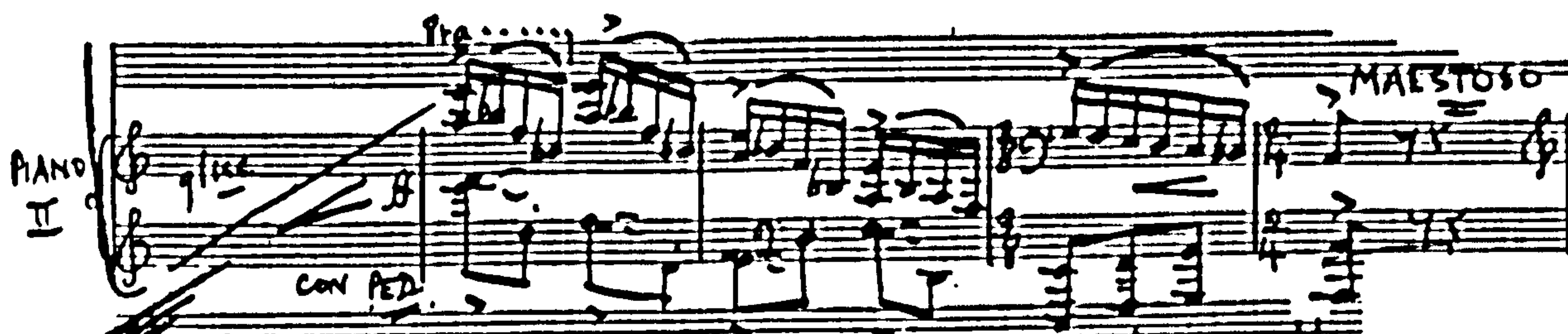
In using these traditional forms, the climax, or series of climaxes, are still vitally important, particularly with the busy complexities that come with two solo pianos; Leighton is able to be much more selective and restrained with climaxes in both the oboe and the cello concertos. In concluding with a slow movement, there is no sense of an obligatory climactic ending in the cello concerto – instead, textures reduce to a trio between first and second violins and solo cello ending the concerto in a composed manner with bare fifths (Ex. 4.88).

Ex. 4.88: *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 – movement 3, bars 99 to 103

The use of textures within the orchestra is similar throughout these works, each concerto sharing certain patterns. Typically of Leighton, textures change frequently in line with the constant development of musical material, which is especially vital when working with the limited resources of strings only. In the concerto for two pianos, there are a number of new techniques in the piano writing that do not feature in other piano works from this period. The first of these comes in the form of *glissandi*, as found towards the end of the first movement (Ex. 4.89); this particular ascending *glissando* is followed immediately by a rapidly

descending figure. The second movement also contains two rising *glissandi* from bar 36 in the first piano part, although this time used with a soft dynamic.

Ex. 4.89: *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26 – movement 1, bars 269 to 273



Perhaps based on a restricted version of this *glissando* technique, the first piano presents blurred parallel rising and falling chords from bar 225, joined by the second piano in contrary motion and an octave higher at bar 233. In a similar way to the *Piano Concerto No. 1* the pianos are both used as accompaniment within the *Concerto for Two Pianos*, and within this the piano takes on two more new textures, the first being a tremolo effect, found in the slow movement from bar 32 (Ex. 4.90) and the second harp-like broken chords. The introduction of grace-note figures before the beat found from bar 51 in the slow movement of the two-piano concerto adds a sharp rhythmic element to the piano writing (Ex. 4.91). The pianos receive some of their most virtuosic treatment in the first movement with a fiendish trial of the pianists' ensemble from bar 224 (Ex. 4.92).



Ex. 4.90: *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26 – movement 2, bars 31 to 34

Strings  
Violins I  
Violins II  
Violas  
Cellos/Double Basses  
Tym.  
PIANO I

Ex. 4.91: *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26 – movement 2, bars 51 to 54

MA SEMPRE COSTANTE - A TEMPO GIUSTO  
Piano I  
Piano II  
Pizzicato  
Tempo giusto sempre

Ex. 4.92: *Concerto for Two Pianos, String Orchestra and Timpani* Opus 26 – movement 1, bars 224 to 228



The orchestral textures are at their widest and most varied in these three concertos. There are a number of occasions when the soloist is left unaccompanied, and in the oboe concerto the oboist begins each movement accompanied by just the upper strings, although the third movement sees the lower strings joining the texture soon afterwards (Ex. 4.93). This is a significant move away from earlier works for strings by Leighton, which saw the strings introduced imitatively accumulating upwards from the double basses. As Finzi attested in his letter to Leighton quoted above (see page 207), the string writing is quite difficult and may have been the reason the Newbury String Players did not perform the oboe concerto in public.

There are simpler textures that recur from earlier works: the tremolo chordal writing that takes place below the oboe cadenza is to be heard in the *Concerto for Viola Harp Strings and Timpani* and the *Veris Gratia Suite*, with a *colla parte* indication in the score.



Ex. 4.93: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 3, bars 1 to 6

While *Pizzicato* string writing was a common feature of earlier works for strings, its use in all three of these concertos is more prolific; *pizzicato* chords accompany extended sections of two-part counterpoint in the slow movement of the oboe concerto, while the final movement sees more complex employment of *pizzicato* writing working upwards through the strings from bar 29 as well as later in the movement. In the third movement of the two-piano concerto, syncopated *pizzicato* writing provides a new accompaniment feature from bar 20. In the string writing of the oboe concerto, interestingly, the introduction of the second subject of the final movement represents the first section for the strings that could have been conceived at the piano, demonstrating a significantly advanced technique in the broad conception of Leighton's musical ideas and textures (Ex. 4.94). The close and chordal nature of this short section is often typical of that found, for example, in the *Veris Gratia Cantata* discussed in Chapter Two. The timpani, following on from its introduction and adoption of melodic and rhythmic themes in the *Concerto for Viola, Harp, Strings and Timpani*, continues to be melodic, although based essentially, and typically on the interval of the fourth.

Ex. 4.94: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 3, bars 68 to 73

The musical score for Ex. 4.94, *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23, movement 3, bars 68 to 73, is presented in a standard orchestral format. The score includes parts for Oboe (Ob.), Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vcl), and Contrabass (Cb.). The Oboe part features a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Violin I and II parts have slurs and accents. The Viola part has slurs and accents. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts have slurs and accents. The score is in 2/4 time and G major.

The cello concerto, mainly as a result of the size of the score, contains a higher number of varied textures. Leighton is very selective with the use of the tutti orchestra in this work, with textures mainly growing gradually throughout prolonged sections, full orchestra occurring only at the main climax points. Themes and accompaniments are passed around the orchestra as different nuances are used to full effect in transforming the properties of the musical material. Each section of the orchestra is generally used separately and in turn by Leighton, with varying degrees of colour, before they are combined as required for growing textures. These increases in texture often represent increases in tension or anticipation, such as at the end of the trio of the *Scherzo and Trio* movement. With much individual thought going into the scoring of these works, there is seemingly no reliance on the techniques and styles of other composers throughout this concerto, although aggressive, repetitive chords in the string passages in the second movement are a little reminiscent of Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (Ex. 4.95).



Ex. 4.95: *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 – movement 2, bars 31 to 37



Leighton's writing for the solo instruments in his concertos had become quite developed by this point; after this period, he was to write only four more concertos throughout his career, two of which were to be his second and third piano concertos. On the whole, the solo writing has become less relentless, and more widely appropriate, with more passages of rests for the soloist. The writing for oboe is particularly virtuosic in places, although it is clear that an empty show of technique is not his consideration. While the cadenzas of the oboe concerto and various other points present some fiendish writing (Ex. 4.96), there is also much evidence of lyrical and increasingly rhapsodic lines. This is true of the remaining two concertos of this period, in particular the cello concerto, with its wide range of emotions and often exposed writing, for example at the opening of the third movement (Ex. 4.97). Often as the cello writing becomes higher in range the accompaniment moves from the strings to the woodwind. Wide intervals are characteristic of the poignant style used by Leighton to gain an often plaintive and spontaneous mood with the cello; there are many chances for his favoured intervals to come into play, particularly the tritone, the seventh and the ninth in an often improvisatory and spontaneous concerto.

Ex. 4.96: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 1, bars 69 to 80

Ex. 4.97: *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 – movement 3, bars 1 to 9

There are many continued examples of musical economy and unity within these three concertos. Themes in Leighton's music had always been subject to much variation, but they are progressively being developed beyond the point of recognition, subtly holding a movement or work together. There are also elements from other works present in these concertos, some more vivid than others. The BACH theme is found at the opening of the oboe concerto, in an transposed and altered version and in a section of bitonality (ABCH), perhaps demonstrating that he may have been already considering writing a work based on



the BACH theme, which was to come in 1955 with the *Fantasia on the name BACH* (Ex. 4.98). The ABCH theme does not recur throughout the movement, but it does conclude with a further altered version of the four-note theme.

Ex. 4.98: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 1, bars 1 to 4

The musical score for the first four bars of the first movement of the Concerto for Oboe and Strings, Opus 23, is shown. The score is for Oboe Solo, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Bass. The tempo is 'Molto moderato ma con moto'. The Oboe Solo part features a melodic line with a 'segno' marking. The Violin I and II parts have a 'pp' (pianissimo) marking. The Viola, Violoncello, and Bass parts are mostly silent, with some notes in the Viola and Violoncello parts.

The third movement of the oboe concerto sees a number of elements derived from earlier works: a theme clearly from the *Nocturne* of the *Veris Gratia Cantata* can be heard from bar 72 in the cellos forming the beginning of an imitative countermelody (Ex. 4.99); the rising figure in the strings that begins at bar 88 is taken directly from the *Piano Concerto No. 1*. The recurring rhythm of quaver-crotchet-quaver first featured in Leighton's student works is found at bar 189 in the first movement and from bar 49 in the final movement of the two-piano concerto. Persistent rhythms such as this are also an important factor at the opening of each movement of the cello concerto.

The five-note theme from the first piano concerto is not relied upon so heavily in these works, being only occasionally observed in the oboe concerto; the slow movement of the oboe concerto sees it used in fragment form in the string accompaniment writing (Ex.

4.100). The five-note theme is least in evidence in the cello concerto, being first stated only in the middle of the second movement at bar 287; however, there are more examples in the third and final movement, such as at bar 55 (Ex. 4.101). Cyclical elements are important within each concerto, although mostly in fragment form. Themes are also extended by using fragments of an opening phrase in sequence, such as at the opening of the third movement of the oboe concerto (Ex. 4.102).

Ex. 4.99: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 3, bars 68 to 80

The musical score for Ex. 4.99 is a two-system score for the third movement of the Concerto for Oboe and Strings, Opus 23. The first system covers bars 68 to 73, and the second system covers bars 74 to 80. The score is in 2/4 time and features an oboe (Ob.) and a string ensemble (Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses). The oboe part is marked 'p' and 'f' and includes a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. The string parts are marked 'p' and 'f' and include a 'rit.' marking. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at bar 74. The tempo is marked '(sempre in tempo)'.



Ex. 4.100: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 2, bars 6 to 8

Ex. 4.101: *Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra* Opus 31 – movement 3, bars 55 to 57

Ex. 4.102: *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* Opus 23 – movement 3, bars 1 to 6

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This period of concentrated composition in Leeds proved to be particularly beneficial at this point in Leighton's development. During this time, while he was effectively free from worry about financial considerations, he was able to continue experimenting, and taking his compositional progress to new levels. Important commissions and publications were beginning to occur, and Leighton's name and more importantly musical style were to become evident and recognised at all levels of the musical world in Britain. The increase in his confidence is palpable as a result and Leighton's clear belief in his own abilities and in his capability to forge a musical language and individual creative persona is becoming obvious. It is at this point that the mature recognisable style of Leighton begins to emerge almost complete.



## Chapter Five

### Edinburgh, 1956-1959

Leighton took up his appointment as Lecturer at the Faculty of Music in the University of Edinburgh in the Autumn Term of 1956 (succeeding composer Hans Gál<sup>1</sup>), and despite his return to teaching duties, he continued to compose at a rate close to that when he was the Gregory Fellow at the University of Leeds. The diversity of his composing also continued: his only work completed in the remainder of 1956, however, was the relatively short unaccompanied carol *Nativitie*, with much more of his time being spent on the much larger *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18, which was begun in October and finished early in 1957.

**Table 5.1:** Compositions from January 1956 to September 1957

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
Nov. – Dec. 1956	<i>Nativitie</i>	SSATB	[13]
Oct. 1956 – Jan. 1957	<i>Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue</i>	Full orch.	18
April 1957	<i>In Honorem B.W.G. Rose D.Mus.</i>	SATB	-
Feb. – June 1957	<i>String Quartet No. 2</i>	2 vln, vla, vc	33
June 1957	<i>God's Grandeur</i>	SATB	[13]
June – Sept. 1957	<i>Burlesque for Orchestra</i>	Full orch.	19

The above table displays a regular output of suitably different works; none of these six works was written as a response to a commission, continuing a recent pattern with the majority of his compositions from his time at Leeds, which were also not the result of commissions. In a way this was beneficial to Leighton – just at the point of reaching

<sup>1</sup> Various, *University of Edinburgh Calendar 1956-1957* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956).



musical maturity and individuality he was free to write for any scoring and any scale of piece, with none of the restrictions of composing for a specific genre or group of performers. As a consequence, of the six works above, three are large in scale, while the three choral works are miniatures. For the first time, piano works do not feature at all, and in fact none of these works even features the piano, which could perhaps be interpreted as a sign of Leighton's growing confidence in his abilities with less reliance on his own instrument. Concertos are also not a feature of works from this period, although by the end of 1958 he had begun work on his second concerto for piano and full orchestra, which was not completed until as late as September 1960. Instrumental works are also not a major aspect of this period of just over a year; Leighton was to return to this genre in 1958 with the *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35.

Written between November and December of 1956, there are no known details regarding the first performance of *Nativitie* and it appears not to have been a commission. It is not impossible however that it was performed at some point shortly after its composition, perhaps by a student group, although no details exist to suggest this. *Nativitie* did not reach publication until 1971, when it was published by the New York firm, Carl Fischer.

*Nativitie* was begun and completed during the composition of a work on a far larger scale, the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* Opus 18. Begun in October of 1956 and completed in January of 1957, it is for a standard full orchestra and in three movements, each of which runs directly into the next. There is no real explanation as to the opus number of this work, which represents a dramatic drop in number from the previously allocated opus number



(from 32 to 18) – not until after 1960 did Leighton's opus numbers become allocated chronologically. The *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* Opus 18 was first performed on 23 May 1959 in a BBC radio broadcast; Leighton himself conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

A slight oddity in Leighton's composition book for 1957 lies in the short choral work, *In Honorem B.W.G. Rose D. Mus.*, composed in April of 1957. It was written for the occasion of Bernard Rose's departure from The Queen's College, Oxford to take up the position for which he was most well-known, as Informator Choristarum and Fellow of Magdalen College, still at The University of Oxford – the exact date on which this short piece was performed is currently unknown as are the performers, although it is possible that the Eglesfield Musical Society would have been involved. It is also not clear how this work came about in particular, but the text is by Henry Blyth and is not entirely serious, but is certainly sincere about Rose's move between colleges. The composition of the work (it is scored for unaccompanied SATB choir and baritone solo) owes much to the carols Leighton had written up to this point. Rather appropriately, the usual soprano soloist that appears in the carols is replaced with a baritone, as Rose himself was a baritone and had sung the first performances in Oxford of both the *Five Shakespeare Songs* and *Six Songs of Spring* while Leighton was still an undergraduate.

*In Honorem B.W.G. Rose D. Mus.* was written during the composition of the *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33, although there are no particular musical aspects that unite these two very different works. According to Edward Harper, following the commission of *String Quartet No. 1* from the BBC, Leighton was so enamoured with the possibilities open to him

(particularly the contrapuntal possibilities) in writing for the four equal parts of string quartet that while completing the first quartet 'he was so enthusiastic that he also made plans for a second quartet'.<sup>2</sup> There is evidence of this contained within the manuscript collection, the inclusion of both works on one manuscript of sketches, which shows that he was working on both pieces at around the same time. It was finally begun, however, in February of 1957 and completed in June of the same year. The main difference when compared with the first quartet is the addition of a final slow movement, taking the total to four with a fast-slow-fast-slow arrangement.

Leighton's second string quartet was first performed on 24 October 1957 by the New Edinburgh Quartet at the Reid Concert Hall at the University of Edinburgh. The following review from the first performance suggests that it was well received:

Cast in the normal four movements, it is a work of high seriousness, sustained invention and technical resource. It is genuine quartet music taking account not only of what is feasible but what is effective and expressive on four-stringed instruments. The actual vocabulary is one of chronic, rather than wistful dissonance, but one used with such keen-eared discretion and consistency that it immediately establishes its own standards of stress and relaxation. The clash of semitones, and the simultaneous sounding of major and minor thirds, is accepted as a norm, the deciding artistic factor being of context.<sup>3</sup>

The *String Quartet No. 2*, when it was published in 1960, was the last work of Leighton's to be published by the firm of Lengnick, his relationship with Novello being firmly established by this point, although not with an entirely exclusive agreement. His association with Novello as one of their 'house' composers, dictated that they would have first refusal on

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<sup>2</sup> Harper, Edward, *Kenneth Leighton: Quartets Nos. 1 & 2, Seven Variations for String Quartet*, (London: Meridian Records, 2002), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Grier, Christopher, *Premiere of Leighton Work: String quartet impresses*, (The Scotsman, 25 October 1957).



any work that he composed, with an option to offer any work that was not accepted to other publishers. In some circumstances, if a different publisher were to commission a work specifically to be published by them, this was also allowed; publishers that were to commission works from Leighton eventually included: Oxford University Press, who commissioned a significant number of works including *Paeon* and *Fanfare*, both for organ; the Italian firm, Ricordi, who commissioned *Jack-in-the-Box*; the Trinity College of Music, London, for their graded exams; and the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, also for their graded exams.

As Leighton was finishing his second string quartet, he embarked upon a new choral work, which was completed in the same month as the quartet, and represents a substantial forward progression in his writing. It is his first really serious work for choral forces, and is particularly uncompromising in direct comparison with the more accessible carols, revealing a more mature and resolutely individual style that is wholly appropriate to the chosen text by Gerard Manley Hopkins. *God's Grandeur* is scored for unaccompanied SATB (with no solo part) and labelled in the published score as a motet.

Once again, *God's Grandeur* was not the result of a commission, and the date of the first performance, and performers, of this work is unknown. It was however initially allotted an opus number jointly with *Nativitie*. In the first composition book only, the two pieces were paired together and given Opus 13; there is no other record of this and Opus 13 was removed from both works and eventually remained unassigned. As has already been observed, they weren't the only pieces to be subject to a withdrawal of an opus number, the



earlier *Serenade in C for Flute and Piano* was allotted Opus 19, which was later taken away and given to the last work that Leighton completed in 1957, *Burlesque for Orchestra*.

The *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 is in one movement and is scored for a straightforward full orchestra. Despite not being commissioned, it went on to receive its first performance in a BBC broadcast by the BBC Scottish Orchestra, conducted by Colin Davis, and was first performed publicly in a BBC Promenade Concert, with Leighton himself conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra, on 3 September 1959. Leighton himself wrote a very brief note about the work that was quoted in the programme note of the first public performance: 'There is no programme to it. It sets out simply to express feelings of exuberance and sometimes playfulness with a good deal of orchestral brilliance, as I hope!'<sup>4</sup>

**Table 5.2:** Compositions from July 1957 to June 1958

Date of Composition	Title	Scoring	Opus Number
July 1957 – June 1958	<i>The Light Invisible – Sinfonia Sacra</i>	T Solo, SATB, full orch.	16

As can be seen from the above table, the majority of Leighton's compositional activities in the second half of 1957 and the first half of 1958 were centred on a major and defining work. Begun in July of 1957 and finished in June of 1958, *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 was commissioned for the 1958 Three Choirs Festival, which was staged that year in Hereford. Scored for tenor solo, large chorus and a conventional full orchestra, it was first performed in Hereford Cathedral on 9 September 1958; David Galliver was the tenor soloist, and the London Symphony Orchestra was conducted by David Guest. The work is subtitled

<sup>4</sup> Anon., *Burlesque for Orchestra*, (Programme note: Promenade Concert, Royal Albert Hall, 3 September 1959).



*Sinfonia Sacra* and the text of the work is taken from the Lamentations, Jeremiah, Psalm 130 and *The Rock* by Thomas Stearn Eliot. The conventional full orchestra that is normally found in Leighton's works is slightly enlarged with the inclusion of a harp and two percussionists to play the bass drum, side drum, cymbals and gong – Leighton is mostly quite sparing with his use of percussion in orchestral works.

It is separated into two substantial parts, Psalm 130 and the text from Jeremiah being found in the first part and *The Rock* in the second, with the text from Lamentations being found in both parts. Leighton's own note printed in the programme from the first performance of this work reads:

The theme of this work occurred to the composer about three years ago, on re-reading the Book of Jeremiah. Sketches for the first part were made in 1956, but the whole was not completed until April of this year. The intention was to make the meaning of the work as clear as possible by setting a visionary passage from Jeremiah directly alongside a modern poem; and the solution was eventually found in the choruses from T[homas] S[tearn] Eliot's "The Rock" (which the author kindly gave his permission to use).<sup>5</sup>

As a work of this size premièred in the Three Choirs Festival, *The Light Invisible* was sure to receive a good deal of attention. This substantial review from Ernest Bradbury appeared shortly afterwards in *The Musical Times*:

Kenneth Leighton calls his latest work, for tenor solo, chorus and orchestra, a *Sinfonia Sacra*. As such it is a weightier and more solemn work than *The Birds* of last year (heard not long ago in a favourable broadcast) though it further consolidates, in its tighter texture, the free chromatic technique exploited in some of the numbers from that choral suite. This is in fact Leighton's first choral work of substance (his early cantata *Veris Gratia*, still in manuscript, I do not know) and in it he appears to have shed the last vestige such 'English' influence as he acknowledges – that of Vaughan Williams, Rubbra and Walton – while acquiring, of course, a stronger personal bias in which natural instinct proves a more

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<sup>5</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *The Light Invisible: Sinfonia Sacra*, (Programme Note: Three Choirs Festival, Hereford Cathedral, 9 September 1958).

incalculable and exciting force than coldly considered judgement. There are one or two superficial resemblances to the Walton of *Balham's Feast*, in the short rhythms, in the bold sweep and three-in-one impetus of the final chorus and in a sudden declamatory unaccompanied solo of tortuous intervallic progression. Like Elgar's *Gerontius* the shorter first part begins with a single line melody, and Part Two with a slow-moving and somewhat ethereal introduction. But Leighton's opening melody contains all the twelve semitones (foreshadowing the close knit, though by no means strict, pattern of his chromatic thinking throughout the work) with two phrases of falling minor seconds, which exert a strong influence over the music and its characteristically narrow intervals. The extension of these intervals as the work moves towards its close emphasises the literary trend of the composition, with its message of hope (Eliot's 'The soul of Man must quicken to creation') and its glory in the Light. Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* was incipiently a work of light: Leighton's piece is overtly so. The words – skilfully arranged – are from Jeremiah, with the *De Profundis* of Psalm 130 (tenor solo) set against a chorus from Lamentations, moving by a natural transition into sections of three Choruses from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*. In one single instance, at the words

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!  
Too bright for mortal vision,

does Leighton break out momentarily into a solid D major – a touch of romanticism that may well prove one of the most moving moments in the whole work.<sup>6</sup>

While this review suggests links with previous British composers of oratorio-scale works, it is encouraging none-the-less and the work appears to have been fairly successful – the comparisons made are merely on the surface. Leighton himself confided to one of his contacts at Novello that *The Light Invisible*, 'didn't fit well into the Three-Choir set-up', and the contact also voiced his opinion that 'the performance was so gutless (chorally) that the work had no chance' and that 'whatever the Three Choirs may have been in the past, it's no longer the place for a first performance of a complex and chromaticky [*sic*] work.'<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the scale and some of the difficulties presented by *The Light Invisible* –

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<sup>6</sup> Bradbury, Ernest, *Kenneth Leighton's 'The Light Invisible'*, (The Musical Times, Vol. 99, No. 1386, August 1958) 426.

<sup>7</sup> W.E., correspondence with Kenneth Leighton, (2 October 1958).



particularly the often dense chromatic qualities – means it has been seldom performed since its première, and is little known.

**Table 5.3:** Compositions from September 1958 to October 1959

<b>Date of Composition</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Scoring</b>	<b>Opus Number</b>
Sept. – Nov. 1958	Music for television production <i>The Life and Death of Sir John Falstaff</i>	Wind quintet, string quartet, 3 trpt, perc.	-
Sept. 1958 – April 1959	<i>Quintet for Piano and String Quartet</i>	2 vln, vla, vc, pf	34
March – April 1959	<i>Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense</i>	SATB, org	-
April 1959	<i>Dreaming</i>	pf	-
Possibly April 1959	<i>Carol</i>	Pf	-
April 1959	<i>Jack-in-the-Box</i>	pf	-
May – July 1959	Rescoring and revision of <i>Concerto for Piano No.1 in D minor</i>	pf, full orch.	11
From 1958 – Sept. 1959	<i>Partita for Cello and Piano</i>	vc, pf	35
From 1958 – Oct. 1959	<i>Nine Variations for Piano</i>	pf	36
Dec. 1959	<i>Nocturne for Violin and Piano</i>	Vln, pf	-

In the above table, the remainder of 1958 and 1959 can be seen as particularly productive in terms of composition. Following the completion of *The Light Invisible*, this period shows a number of important commissions. The first of these is incidental music for a BBC television production, *The Life and Death of Sir John Falstaff*, which may well have come about following the incidental music for the two BBC radio plays that Leighton composed in 1955 and 1956 (*Persian War* and *The Ivory Tower* respectively). While this kind of exposure was significant for Leighton at this stage, it did not represent the beginning of a body of work for radio and television, but was in fact the last incidental music he ever wrote. It must also be remembered that the number of people that would have seen the programme may have

been minimal, with televisions still not being as widespread as they are today. The only existing manuscript of this work remains in the BBC archives and is currently unavailable, as is the programme itself.

Alongside this incidental music for television, Leighton was writing a perhaps much more significant work, the *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34. In his programme note for this work, Leighton wrote: "This work was written during 1958 and 1959, in response to a B.B.C. commission for the 1959 Cheltenham Festival and first performed by the London String Quartet with the composer at the piano."<sup>8</sup> Representing another defining work in scale and quality, it was the second significant composition of his to be premièred at the Cheltenham Festival, two years after his cello concerto was first performed there, which signifies something of a milestone for Leighton in his career as a composer. It is in four movements, and is almost 30 minutes in length.

On a postcard dated 14 December 1957 (see Illustration 5.i, Bernard Rose wrote the following:

Thank you so much for your B.A.C.H. – the old man w[oul]d have admired its virility! Well done. You didn't autograph it!

Will you write us a Magnificat and Nunc Dim[ittis] (in English), and call it Collegium Magdalenae? Please do – Novello w[oul]d publish it for you I am sure.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

<sup>9</sup> Rose, Bernard, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton, (14 December 1957).



**Illustration 5.i:** Facsimile of a postcard from Bernard Rose to Leighton on 14 December 1957

FROM  
DR. BERNARD ROSE

~~THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.~~  
BAMPTON, OXFORD.

Thank you so much for your B.A.C.H. - the old man  
we have admired its virility! Well done. You didn't  
autograph it!

Will you write us a Magnificat & Nunc Dim. (in English),  
and call it Collegium Magdalenae? Please do - Novello will  
publish it for you I am sure.

Love to you all - specially Lydia just now.

Brn  
B.

14.12.57

This briefest of notes resulted in the first of Leighton's two settings of the Anglican evening canticles, *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense*, written between March and April of 1959. At the time of the request for these canticles from Rose, Leighton was midway through composing *The Light Invisible*, and this, along with the two BBC commissions that follow, explains how he actually came to write the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* over a year later. As one of his most striking and recognisable liturgical choral works, it is still performed frequently today, and Novello did indeed publish it just a year after its composition in 1960. Upon receiving the manuscript of this work in April 1959, Rose wrote the following to Leighton, with three suggestions for minor alterations, which were taken into account:

My dear Kenneth,

The score arrived to-day, and I think the music is splendid. The only thing which alarms me is the high tessitura of much of the alto line - females w[oul]d manage it alright, but the average male alto (excepting the odd few like Deller) don't [sic] sound well above say C(#?) at the most. There are several passages where the boys



could divide & sing the alto part, whilst making slight adjustments – on the [...] MS. paper I make very tentative suggestions, & please don't think I am trying to show you how to compose!!

[...] I beg you not to be offended by these suggestions, but I do think that something of the sort will make a lot of difference to the performance. Rubbra has written some absurd vocal parts in his music, w[hilch] puts a lot of it out of the reach of Cathedral and Chapel choirs. I hope the suggestions will not hold up publication, for we can't wait to get going on it!<sup>10</sup>

In making his suggestions, Rose drew manuscript lines on his paper, illustrating his point clearly (Illustration 5.ii); Leighton adopted two of these exactly as Rose suggested, and the third was subject to his own alternate version. The exact date of the first performance of the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* is unknown.

**Illustration 5.ii:** Facsimile of a letter from Bernard Rose to Leighton on 26 March 1959

FROM  
THE ORGANIST


MAGDALEN COLLEGE  
OXFORD

My dear Kenneth,


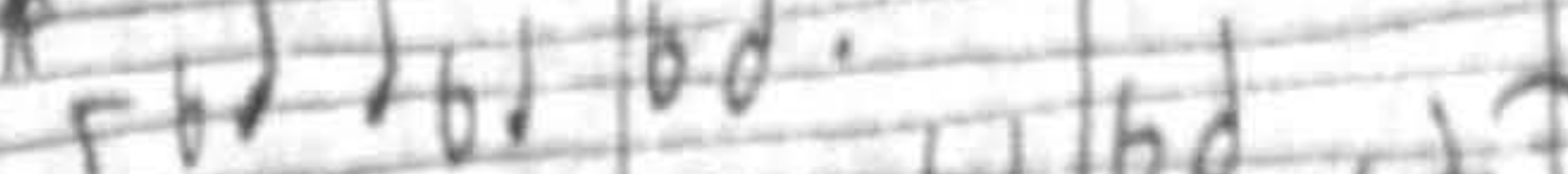
The score arrived to-day, and I think the music is splendid. The only thing which alarms me is the high tessitura of much of the alto line – females wd manage it alright, but the average male alto (excepting the odd few like Veller) don't sound well above say C<sup>(#)</sup> at the most. There are several passages where the boys could divide & sing the alto part, ~~and~~ whilst making slight adjustments – on the incl: MS paper I make very tentative suggestions, & please don't think I am trying to show you how to compose!! There are some tricky places

<sup>10</sup> Rose, Bernard, correspondence with Kenneth Leighton, (26 March 1959)



alto  although

is a slight 1 thumb, because of the approach & the coin.  
pp. 7 (- the lake put down), 8, & first score of p. 9 defeat me. Perhaps:

A  then they can manage the next phrase, <sup>just</sup> (the ~~the~~ do). Then perhaps tacant for the last filled the lungs with good things, making the boys divide on , & the altos coming in on things, and—

MAGDALEN COLLEGE  
OXFORD

I beg you not to be offended by these suggestions, but I do think that something of the sort will make a lot of difference to the performance. Rubbra has written some absurd vocal parts in his music, with parts a lot of it out of the reach of Cathedral & Chapel choirs. I hope the suggestions will not hold up publication, for we can't wait to get going on it!

for we can't wait to get going on it!

Only one point about the organ part. P. 11, bar 4 it says the E's get jumbled up on the organ. Wd my pencilled suggestion in the score offend you?



Many thanks indeed - hope to hear from you  
soon

Love to the family,

Ever

B.

26.11.59

Among Leighton's piano music, there are a number of miniatures that he wrote with children in mind, which do not display the obvious virtuosic technique required for most of his more extended piano works, although some are clearly for the more advanced young player. In the collection of Leighton's manuscripts contained in the University of Edinburgh, it can be seen that he has grouped these particular manuscripts in a folder marked as piano music for children. This interest in writing for younger pianists, which was to continue further into his career, began at about this time with two short works, *Dreaming* and *Jack-in-the-Box*. These two short pieces were both written in April 1959, and *Jack-in-the-Box* was a commission from the Italian publisher Ricordi, who had originally published his *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* as a result of the Busoni Prize. A third short work for piano for this similar standard, *Carol*, is found on the same manuscript as *Dreaming*, although it is undated and not recorded in any of the three composition books – it may also have been composed around April 1959. Leighton continued to write more straightforward piano music, and his next two compositions for the piano in 1965 were also two short compositions for younger players, *Study* and *Lazy Bones*, commissioned by the Trinity College of Music for their graded exams, and published in the grade five syllabus. A number of further works of this kind came with eight short pieces written at various points between 1965 and 1966, which were



grouped to become *Pieces for Angela* Opus 47 and another suite, *Household Pets*, which was written much later, in 1981.

Following on from these short piano pieces for children, two major works reached completion, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the summer of 1959. The *Concerto No. 1 in D minor for Piano and Orchestra* Opus 11, discussed in Chapter Three, received its revision and rescoring between May and July of 1959, and the *Partita for Cello and Piano* Opus 35, begun in 1958, was also completed in September; neither of these works were responses to commissions. The original version of the first piano concerto is unfortunately lost and so the extent of the revision and rescoring cannot be determined. The *Partita* was first performed on 12 August 1960 at the Wigmore Hall in London by Florence Hooton with Leighton at the piano; Hooton had two years earlier premièred Leighton's cello concerto at the Cheltenham Festival. The *Partita* is substantial, consisting of three movements and being of the proportions of a substantial sonata, at almost 20 minutes in length. It was not the first work of Leighton's for this scoring, with the *Sonata in F minor for Cello and Piano* of 1949, and the published *Elegy* Opus 5, taken from that work. Leighton was to write only two more works for solo cello, the *Sonata for Violoncello Solo* Opus 32 in 1967 and *Alleluia Pascha Nostrum*, written for Raphael Wallfisch and Richard Markham in 1981.

The two remaining works completed in 1959 are the *Nine Variations for Piano*, begun in 1958 and completed in 1959, and the *Nocturne for Violin and Piano*, which was written in December 1959. In a time when commissions for Leighton were increasing, these two works, as far as

is known, were not responses to any requests. In the *Nine Variations*, following on from the *Variations* Opus 30 of 1955, the variations themselves are of a note-row and the work makes use of serial techniques in an almost tonal manner similar to the earlier set of *Variations*. Leighton wrote a programme note for the *Nine Variations* that begins:

Nine Variations were composed during 1958 and 1959 and first performed by the composer in Manchester towards the end of 1959. They were not published however until last year, in an edition by John Ogden.

The *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* is a relatively short work in one movement of around five minutes in length, which, while dedicated to his friend and early proponent Frederick Grinke, appears not to have been brought about by a commission. It was first performed in June 1960 by Grinke with Leighton at the Piano on the BBC 'Music at Night' programme.



**Illustration 5.iii:** Ink drawing of Leighton from *Dr. Kenneth Leighton: A profile by Mr. Peter Mann, illustrated by Barbara Balmer*. This short pamphlet was printed for the occasion of the composer receiving his D.Mus. from the University of Oxford in 1960.





## Orchestral Music

Not including *The Light Invisible* – already considered under choral works – there are only two works for full orchestra throughout this period, *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* and *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19. The short programme note for the *Burlesque* by Leighton, was already mentioned above, but the following substantial programme note, again by Leighton, for the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* was included in the programme for the first performance at the Worcester Three Choirs Festival in 1963:

The Passacaglia theme has twelve different notes, but the music is not serial, and the note-row is used as a theme, not as a constructional basis. Over the first three statements of the ground, the strings enter fugally with a second theme which is also varied and extended during the course of the movement. Another three slow variations produce a build-up, which leads directly into an *Allegro*.

The thriving mood of the *Allegro* gives way (without a break) to the Chorale, which is headed by the words 'Plebs Angelica...', the first line of a medieval prayer to the angelic host. The phrases of the chorale melody alternate with soft fugal string passages, which use the twelve-note theme of the Passacaglia.

The Fugue is headed by another quotation:

O truth of Christ  
O most dear rarity  
O most rare Charity  
Where dwell'st thou now?

The Fugue subject is closely related to the theme of the Passacaglia, and the Fugue itself is in two main sections. The coda is in the manner of a chorale prelude on 'Ein Feste Burg'. The Chorale is presented against this on brass in a quadruple time which sometimes cuts across the basic 9/8 of the fugal theme. The meaning of the work lies in the tension created by the juxtaposition of these various elements.

The three-movement *Passacaglia* is the more substantial of these two works at around 19 minutes in length, while the *Burlesque* is around eight minutes. Even though they are not the largest of Leighton's orchestral works, they are both of importance in what they reveal. They are the first of his compositions for orchestra to use some of his more experimental







In order to avoid monotony, the *passacaglia* theme goes through a series of developments, and the first of these takes place at bar 29, where the theme is transported up an octave in the cellos, becoming *arv* and adopting a characteristic double-dotted rhythm. The theme proceeds to be passed around the orchestra, firstly to the horns, the trumpet and then clarinets and flutes in the space of eight bars, becoming transposed along the way. The *passacaglia* theme becomes less strict, as the movement grows in momentum and complexity – it becomes less recognisable and not a constant presence, mostly heard in fragment form as the *Allegro ritmico* section begins at bar. The variations continue as the second theme is introduced at this point, also subject to counterpoint.

Frequently changing accompaniment figures are developed from the opening *passacaglia* theme, which begin to recur from bar 49 in the lower strings, and the melodic and rhythmic patterns of these change at least every few bars (Ex. 5.2). Each one is particularly chromatic in nature and the intervals of the second and fourth, favoured by Leighton, are prominent once more (Ex. 5.3).



Ex. 5.2: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 49 to 52



Ex. 5.3: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 53 to 56



Constant development of both the passacaglia theme and the first and second main subjects characterise the rest of the movement, although, at bar 110, the *passacaglia* theme is returns in an obvious form close to its original. It becomes a little fragmented and is subject to increasing syncopation in the strings and wind as some of the most prolonged *tutti* writing ensues, followed by a section of development on the first subject (Ex. 5.4). As the various themes combine, being mostly heard in fragments, a tension-fraught section of constant semiquaver movement in the strings becomes calmer in preparation for the *Chorale* movement, the *passacaglia* theme making a final whispered appearance at bar 170, the only time in the opening movement it is used imitatively in the strings.

Ex. 5.4: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 110 to 117

Counterpoint is a strong feature of the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue*, and the links to Baroque forms and techniques are undeniable, the movement titles self-explanatory in reference to this particular influence on his music. Contrapuntal techniques exploited in the closing section of the *Fantasia on the Name BACH* Opus 29, *Variations for Piano* Opus 30, and to a great extent in the *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 33 are translated by Leighton into an orchestral medium, enhanced by the colour available from this standard full orchestra.



The extended counterpoint of both the *Passacaglia* and the *Fugue* is contrasted a little by the central chordal *Chorale* section, which serves to balance the textural density of the work as a whole, with only gentle and rhythmically straightforward counterpoint. In the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* Opus 24 and the *Fantasia on the Name BACH*, Leighton chose to use an original chorale theme, but here makes use of a Lutheran Chorale, *Ein feste Burg* the original music and text of which was written by Martin Luther in 1529<sup>11</sup>. This particular chorale is more well-known for its harmonisation by J. S. Bach (Ex. 5.5), and was also used by him in his cantata *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* BWV 80; the opening words translate as 'A strong citadel is our God'.

Ex. 5.5: J.S. Bach harmonisation of *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* Ed. A. Riemenschneider



Leighton also subtitles this movement of the work with a quotation from Helen Waddell's *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, 'Plebs angelica...' – which translates as 'Angelic host' – only using the first line of the first of four verses in this text in honour of St Michael from the Manuscript of St Martial of Limoges.

<sup>11</sup> Various, *The New English Hymnal, Eighth Impression*, (Norfolk: The Canterbury Press Norwich, 1994), 938

The phrases of the chorale, which are answered by contrapuntal entries of the *passacaglia* theme, are at the top of the texture, initially found in the woodwind (Ex. 5.6). The horns take over at bar 26 as the tension and texture typically increase and a constant rhythm in the strings is introduced before the trombones take the chorale theme. An arch-shape form is confirmed as the calm of the opening is restored, a rich hushed section for strings, split into 11 parts, reduces one-by-one during the final chorale statement, concluding on a warm C major chord (Ex. 5.7).

Ex. 5.6: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – Chorale bars 1 to 6

The *Fugue* is also subtitled with a quotation from *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics*, cited in Latin: 'Dic Christi Veritas, dic cara raritas, dic rara caritas, ubi nunc habitas?',<sup>12</sup> which is translated in the programme note quoted above. The fugal theme itself is again related to the *passacaglia* theme, the germ of much of the musical material in this work, a further display of Leighton's keen sense of economy. It provides a complex theme to realise into a full-length fugue, and the complexity of this work is at its most intense in this movement, particularly so with the introduction of a counter-subject at bar six, in reply to the main theme (Ex. 5.8).

<sup>12</sup> Waddell, Helen, *Mediaeval Latin Lyrics – Fifth Edition*, (London: Constable, 1966), 192-193.



Leighton's mature musical language becomes particularly evident in this movement, which is the most concentrated period of orchestral counterpoint in all his works so far (Ex. 5.9).

Ex. 5.7: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Chorale* bars 83 to 86

Rit. ancora

Segue subito la Fuga

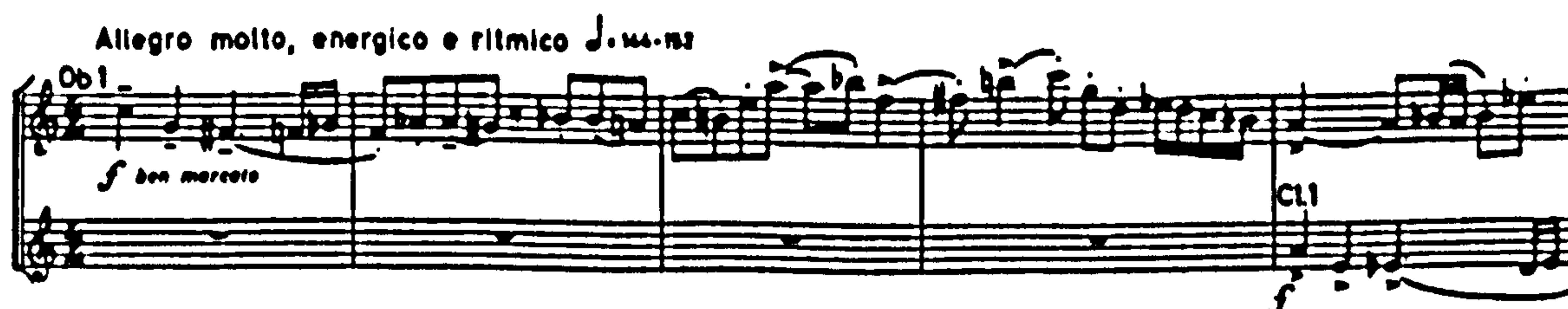
Ex. 5.8: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Fugue* bars 6 to 9

Ex. 5.9: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Fugue* bars 25 to 28



The fugal theme is chromatic, contains 11 notes of a note-row and is fairly wide ranging (Ex. 5.10). The second statement of the fugal theme a fourth lower is made by the first clarinet at bar five, before the flute states the counter-subject based on the end of the oboe line at bar six (see Ex. 5.8).

Ex. 5.10: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Fugue* bars 1 to 5



The scoring begins to increase as further fugal entries appear, the bassoon at bar 10 taking the fugal subject as the counter-subject is adopted by clarinet and oboe, which gradually becomes a version of the passacaglia theme with some of the intervals inverted, a small climax being formed as, in bar 18 the violas adopt the fugal theme against a chromatic decorated accompaniment in the flutes and oboes. The first violins adopt the theme at bar 23, the seconds and violas taking the counter-subject from the end of bar 24 and 26



respectively, before the 'cellos and basses take on the fugal theme at bar 28. The strings alone form their own climax, which is reached at bar 26, when the first violins, flutes and oboe state an inversion of the fugal theme (Ex. 5.11). Against this development, the 'cellos basses and bassoons state the fugal theme. A series of short climaxes follows, each one leading to a slight change in texture, and the ingenuity and range of orchestral textures are by now strikingly evident. In general the counterpoint in the *Fugue* consists of two or three parts, with no real temptation for over-complexity – especially with the characteristics of the fugal theme itself.

Ex. 5.11: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Fugue* bars 33 to 36

The fugal aspect of the movement is lost, as the violas and 'cellos take on rhythmical scherzo-like rhythms at bar 148 in preparation for the restatement of the chorale melody, *Ein feste Burg*. As well as adding a cyclical and unifying element to this work, the return of the chorale theme (now undecorated and not harmonised initially) is reminiscent of the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica*, where the original chorale theme returns in the second fugue, towards the end of the work. The horns state the first phrase of the chorale softly, accompanied by the *scherzo* rhythms of the strings, the chorale taking on a defiant 4/4 time signature against the 9/8 of the *scherzo* rhythms (Ex. 5.12).

Ex. 5.12: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Fugue* irregular barring

The musical score for Ex. 5.12 is a complex orchestral arrangement. It begins with a section for woodwinds and brass, including Trumpets, Trombones, and Timpani. The woodwinds play a melodic line, while the brass provides harmonic support. The string section, consisting of Violins, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses, plays a rhythmic pattern. The score is in 9/8 time and features irregular barring. The woodwinds and brass play the chorale melody, while the strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment. The score is written in a clear, legible style, with notes and rests clearly visible. The overall texture is dense and complex, reflecting the fugal nature of the movement.

The *Burlesque* is not particularly characterised by counterpoint, and links with the style and general texture of the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* are superficial only, the two works being quite different, despite being written in the same year. A similar theme to the second subject of the *Passacaglia* movement, a rising figure based on the rhythm of the ubiquitous five-note



theme, is used as a main feature of the opening melodic material of the *Burlesque*, and is found in similar fragment form in sections of development in both works (Ex. 5.13i & ii). While there is a sufficient amount of variation, particularly in orchestral texture, the momentum of this work is never reduced, and the 'exuberance', 'playfulness' and 'orchestral brilliance' described by Leighton above are all in evidence. The suggested minor key found throughout most of this work, which is typical of many of Leighton's works from his developmental periods as a composer, offsets a little of this exuberance, although the unpredictable and highly syncopated lines that occur throughout support the playful aspect (Ex. 5.14).

Ex. 5.13i: *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 – bars 10 to 13

Tempo giustissimo

Picc. Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Bassoon

Strings

*sforzando*

Ex. 5.13ii: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 49 to 52

Violins I

Violins II

Violas

Cellos

Double Basses

*f molto energico*

*pizzicato*

Ex. 5.14: *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 – bars 142 to 147



The constantly changing orchestral texture is testament to the orchestral brilliance of this work. In contrast to the some of the restrictions enforced by extended counterpoint in the *Passacaglia*, Leighton's groupings of instruments are able to change more frequently in the *Burlesque* and encompass a greater number and variety of combinations. His combinations of instruments beyond the traditional introduction of the first theme by the strings, up to bar 10, also reveal a keen level of imagination. At bar 10, the ensemble changes to horns, flute and oboe punctuated by *pizzicato* violins, and at bar 15 the full woodwind section is accompanied by *arco* violins and *pizzicato* violas. Other more unusual combinations and effects are achieved at various points: from bar 37 as *arco* strings are combined with trumpet, trombone, clarinets, bassoons and double bassoon; from bar 139, as *pizzicato* violins and muted trumpets are combined with clarinets and sustained horns; and towards the end of the piece from bar 270, where the bassoons, double bassoon, horns and strings accompany unison flutes and trumpets (Ex. 5.15).



Ex. 5.15: *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 – bars 136 to 141

In some ways the *Burlesque* is more analogous to Leighton's more youthful works. In particular, parallels can be drawn between the opening of this work and that of the *Piano Concerto No. 1* Opus 11, with a short orchestral *tutti* followed by the main theme in the strings – which in the *Burlesque* includes the rhythm of the five-note theme – each phrase being punctuated by the remainder of the orchestra (Ex. 5.16). The horn figures at bar ten are also close to those of the muted trumpets found in a similar place in the piano concerto's first movement (Ex. 5.17). The almost relentless nature of the work ties it in with

the format of earlier works. The five-note theme, which originated in the first piano concerto, is by this point firmly ingrained in Leighton's musical style. As a completely established feature, it has found in the majority of his works in some format, whether in rhythmic or melodic form.

Ex. 5.16: *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 – bars 1 to 3

Allegro molto e vivo

FLUTE I

FLUTE II & PICCOLO

OBOES I, II

CLARINETS I, II  
in Bb

BASSOONS I, II

DOUBLE BASSOON

HORNS I, II  
in F

HORNS III, IV

TRUMPETS I, II  
in C

TRUMPET III

TENOR TROMBONES I, II

BASS TROMBONE

TIMPANI  
in C, E

PERCUSSION

Allegro molto e vivo

VIOLINS I

VIOLINS II

VIOLAS

CELLOS

BASSES

Ex. 5.17: *Burlesque for Orchestra* Opus 19 – bars 10 to 13

*f* *ritardando e molto*



The use of form in Leighton's orchestral works can still be seen to be fairly traditional, although convoluted variations are to be expected by this point in his development, and particularly with a style that includes much continual development. With the Baroque element of the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue*, a small level of adherence to form is dictated, although there is still much flexibility. Leighton also applies his own musical identity to that work in a plentiful manner in each of the three movements, at times combining a languishing, lyrical and Romantic nature, with the dissonant and chromatic twentieth-century harmonic and rhythmic style (Ex. 5.18). The *Burlesque* on the other hand, which is in only one movement, makes clear use of sonata form, and is overture-like in its nature and overall construction.

Ex. 5.18: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 139 to 142



As in previous orchestral works, Leighton creates his orchestral palette in the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* using smaller groups or sections of instruments, before combining them as tension and textures increase in the climactic parts of each movement. Following the first climax of the *Passacaglia* at bar 89, the brass is the final section to become exposed in this way, with close imitative entries (Ex. 5.19). Once again, the orchestral *tutti* is used sparingly,

retaining the clarity and intricacies of Leighton's writing. The use of percussion within his orchestra remains a little cautious; the *Fugue* of the *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* contains the most percussion of the three movements, but even then appearances are scant and its use is only when wholly suitable. Leighton was not to prescribe a large number of percussionists until much later on, and appears to have been far more comfortable with its use to enhance climactic points and as a pedal to underpin the harmony, at this stage. Where the percussion is pitched – as in the case of the timpani – there is occasional evidence of basic melodic material in the percussive line, as in the *Concerto Viola, Harp, Timpani and Strings* Opus 15 discussed in Chapter Three. It wasn't until after 1960 that more extensive use of pitched percussion can be observed in Leighton's orchestral writing.

Ex. 5.19: *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue for Orchestra* Opus 18 – *Passacaglia* bars 88 to 95

## Piano Music

Of the four piano works written during this period, three are miniatures for children (*Dreaming, Carol* and *Jack-in-the-Box*) and one is a more substantial and significant work, the *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – each variation, however, takes the form of a miniature.



*Jack-in-the-Box* and the *Nine Variations* are the only works of the four to be published, the former by Ricordi and the latter by Novello, although not until as late as 1970.

The published edition of the *Nine Variations* contains a substantial editorial note on analysing each variation by the British pianist John Ogdon.<sup>13</sup> In introducing the *Nine Variations* Ogdon proclaims:

His *Nine Variations*, Opus 36, are dodecaphonic. Working in a musical language which other composers have not always found to be pianistically tractable, Dr Leighton fully retains his previously won insights into keyboard-writing.<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of parallels with the *Variations for Piano* Opus 30. It is the second published work of Leighton's to be serial in its construction, however the break away from a tonal base in his writing is more easily detectable in this later essay in serial writing. None of the variations is particularly long, and each movement ranges from around one to two minutes. It is interesting that Leighton did not particularly write any extended works that employ serial techniques in this manner, and as has already been seen, he appears to be much more comfortable with using it as a tool to stretch existing tonality.

The note-row on which the work is based (Ex. 5.20), is used in a similar manner, each variation representing part of a diverse range of styles, although now without titles for each movement as in the earlier work. The introduction of the note-row at the opening of the

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<sup>13</sup> John Ogdon (1937-1989) was a widely respected pianist and composer, and a member of the Manchester New Music group that included Harrison Birtwistle, Alexander Goehr and Peter Maxwell Davies.

<sup>14</sup> Ogdon, John, *Kenneth Leighton: Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36, (London: Novello and Co. Ltd, 1970).





Piece No. 2 is dance-like and chordal, and rejoices in unequal rhythm. No. 3 is in the manner of a fast *Toccata*. No. 4 is a slow lyrical variation, rather nocturnal in character, while No. 5 is a capricious and somewhat ironical canon by contrary motion. Nos. 6 and 7 are both vigorous and even violent forming a central climax from the point of view of the work as a whole. In No. 8 a single chord is present throughout with melodic decorations drawn above and below it. The final fugue is fragmentary and contemplative, a piece which leaves all the questions unanswered.<sup>16</sup>

Ex. 5.22: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 1, bars 4 to 12

Hesitant and anxious chords made up of the note-row begin the freer, contrasting and more abstract second variation. The speed becomes frequently manipulated as the texture passes between these chords and liberal and more reflective statements of the note-row in its various versions (Ex. 5.23).

<sup>16</sup> Ogdon, John, *Kenneth Leighton: Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36, (London: Novello and Co. Ltd, 1970).

Ex. 5.23: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 2, bars 1 to 8

The musical score consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system, covering bars 1 to 4, is marked with the tempo 'esitando molto' and 'accel.' (accelerando). The dynamics are 'P molto staccato e secco' (piano, very detached and dry) with a 'cresc. poco a poco' (crescendo, little by little) instruction. A 'senza Ped.' (without pedal) instruction is written below the first staff. The second system, covering bars 5 to 8, is marked with the tempo 'allegro molto' and a quarter note equal to 170 (J. = 170). The dynamics include 'f' (forte), 'dim.' (diminuendo), 'p' (piano), and 'mp espress.' (mezzo-piano, expressive). The tempo marking 'meno mosso un poco liberamente' (less motion, a little more freely) is written above the second staff.

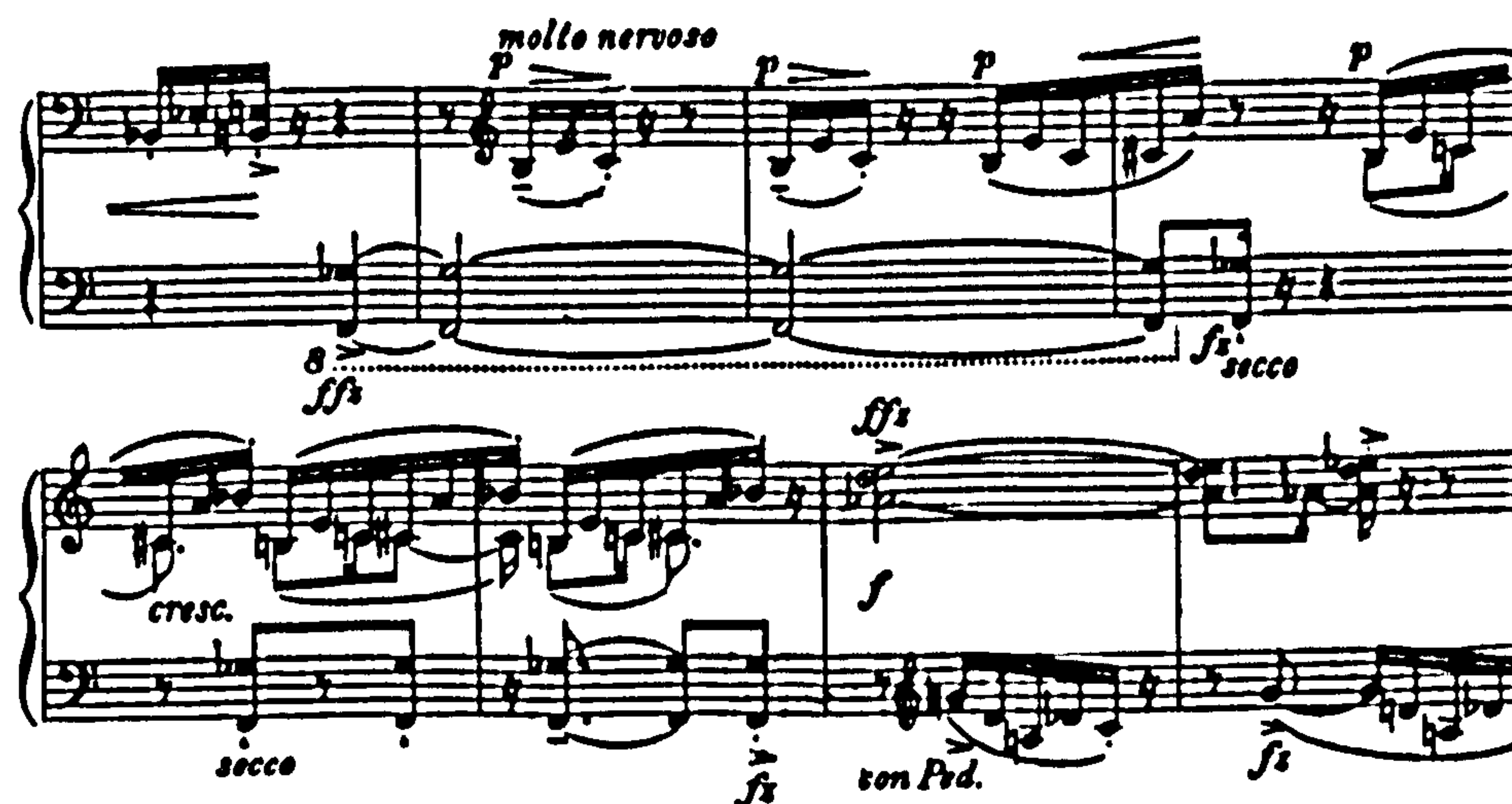
There is much dynamic variation and contrast in the work, which, along with the following seven variations, is through-composed. Especially following the constant slow crotchet rhythm of the first variation, the syncopation of the second variation is quite intricate. This blurring of the time signature combined with the disjunct quality of much of the writing in this variation means that almost no sense of melody and lyricism is present. An elastic structure is the result, and John Ogdon in his description declares that the '[...] rubati of this variation are evidence of a finely-honed pianistic sensibility' The contrasts contained within both this movement and the work as a whole are some of the most extreme of all Leighton's composing up until this point.

The contrasts continue in the hurried toccata that is the third variation, as does the liberal use of syncopation. In employing compositional techniques that make tonality redundant, Leighton also chooses to go that step further, with no discernible metre throughout the *Nine Variations*. The tension is high as the semiquavers of the toccata, which rapidly present the note-row in its four forms, are frequently interrupted by forceful sustained chords once



again made up from the note-row (Ex. 5.24). Ogdon suggests that the slower section from bar 22 is similar to a trio and, and while this would suggest a preceding scherzo, Leighton himself calls it a toccata in his own short description above. There is no return to the opening following this 'B' section however, and a 'C' section begins at bar 51, although this time marked as '*scherzoso*'. Included in this marking the indication of '*e molto chiaro*' is also important: *chiaro* is a direction Leighton was to use in a good number of his later works and the extreme clarity of rhythmic technique required in much of Leighton's music is evident within his main intentions as a composer.

Ex. 5.24: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 3, bars 5 to 12



The fourth variation is entirely different from the third from its opening bars, although this softer mood, more akin to the first variation, is prepared for with a considerable reduction in dynamic and a lengthy pause – the *senza rit.* shows a lack of compromise in the music. A dissonant pedal formed of the first two notes of the note-row is to be observed as perhaps the most lyrical of the *Nine Variations* sees the note-row split between the right and left hands (Ex. 5.25). Following a gradual build towards a climax of the movement, the harmonics employed in the *Variations* Opus 30 are used once more, creating a brief unusual

and eerie effect. A three-note chord is used silently immediately following the loudest point, and Leighton instructs the pianist to 'Put chord down without sounding, raise Pedal and lower it again', before the movement continues. In the remainder of the variation, the free quality and lack of metre intended by Leighton becomes increasingly evident: there are changes in – and manipulations of – tempo marked into almost every one of the remaining nine bars.

Ex. 5.25: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 4, bars 1 to 6



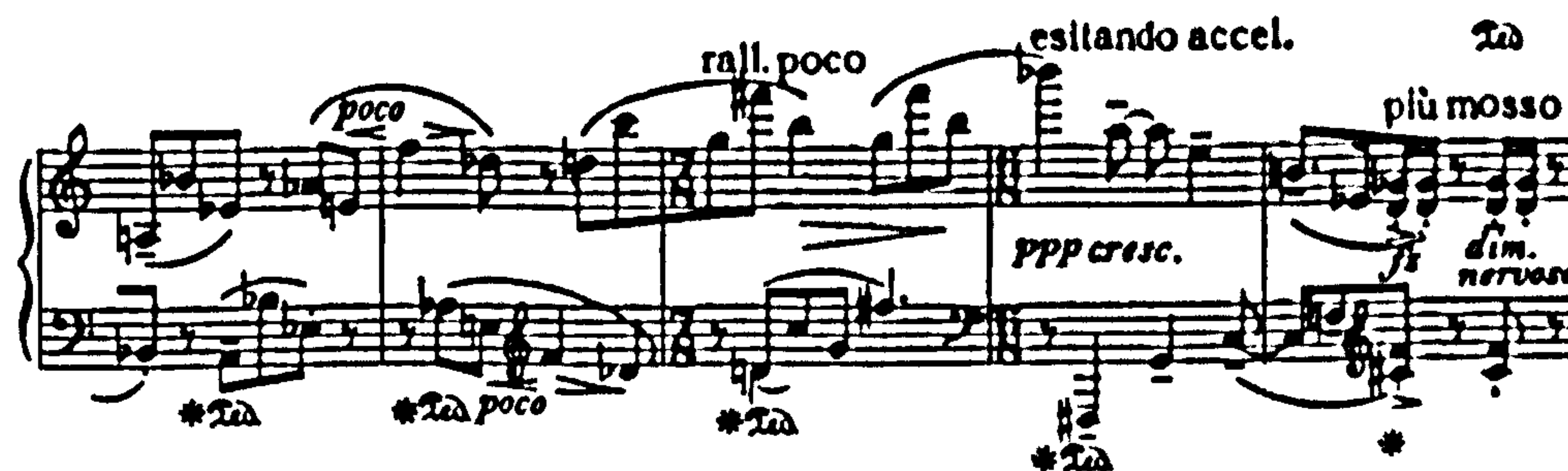
The short fifth variation begins as a mirror canon, the mood having now become mischievous as the left hand imitates the right, although not entirely strictly (Ex. 5.26). Ogdon notes that the fifth variation is 'a Dallapiccola-like *étincelle*', and is certainly the lightest of all the variations in its humour, but, as Leighton suggests in his note above, with a suggestion of irony. At one point the interaction between the two hands becomes a normal imitative canon an octave apart before returning to the contrary canon (Ex. 5.27). The *quasi pizzicato* at bar 16 is suggestive of a more orchestral outlook.



Ex. 5.26: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 5, bars 1 to 3



Ex. 5.27: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 5, bars 8 to 12



The sixth and seventh variations, that form the 'central climax' of the work, begin with a scherzo-like 6/8, stating the retrograde of the note-row. The '*precipitoso*' marking indicates the runaway quality of the sixth variation, the rhythmic diminutions of which, as Ogdon observes, 'add to the motoric impetus' of the variation. Toccata-like semiquaver figurations are contrasted with more static and controlled chords (made up of the note-row), although syncopation continues to be an important factor. A soft statement in octaves of the inversion of the note-row follows the violent climax of the work, which is the most dissonant point so far (Ex. 5.28).

In the seventh variation the texture alternates between chordal treatment of the note-row and melodic fragments. The '*alla marcia*' suggests a stricter and more controlled characteristic in this variation, which is true to an extent, the strictness being somewhat

thwarted by the syncopation and constantly changing rhythmic patterns that make the variation unpredictable (Ex. 5.29). Tension builds throughout the movement, towards the final fifteen bars, which is arguably the crux of the work. The extreme dissonance heard in the sixth variation is exceeded at the conclusion of the seventh, with a '*martellato*' section and a chord of eleven of the twelve notes of the note-row at bar 53.

Ex. 5.28: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 6, bars 49 to 58



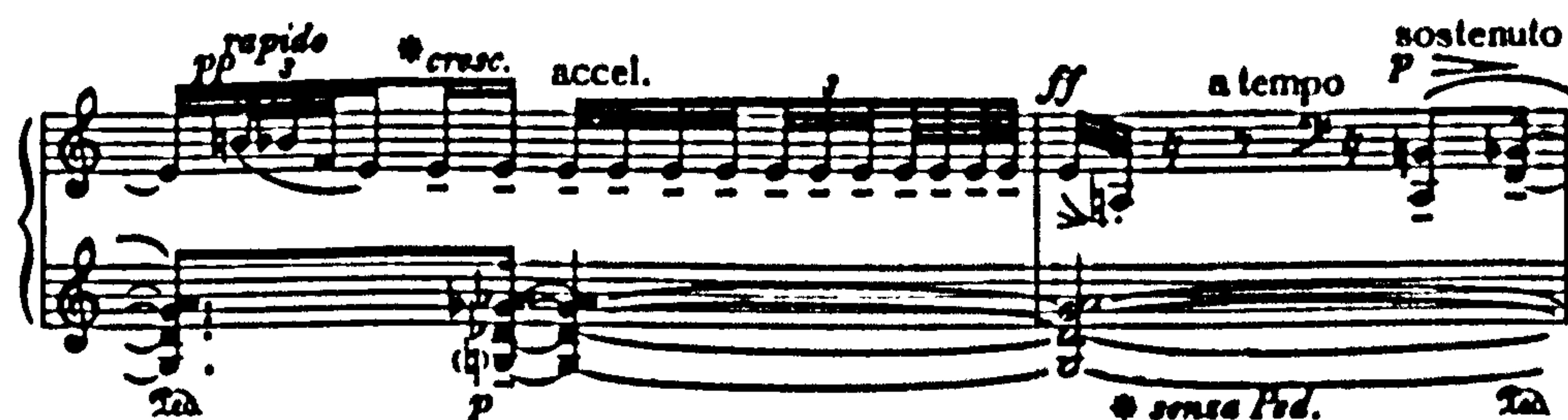
Ex. 5.29: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 7, bars 13 to 15



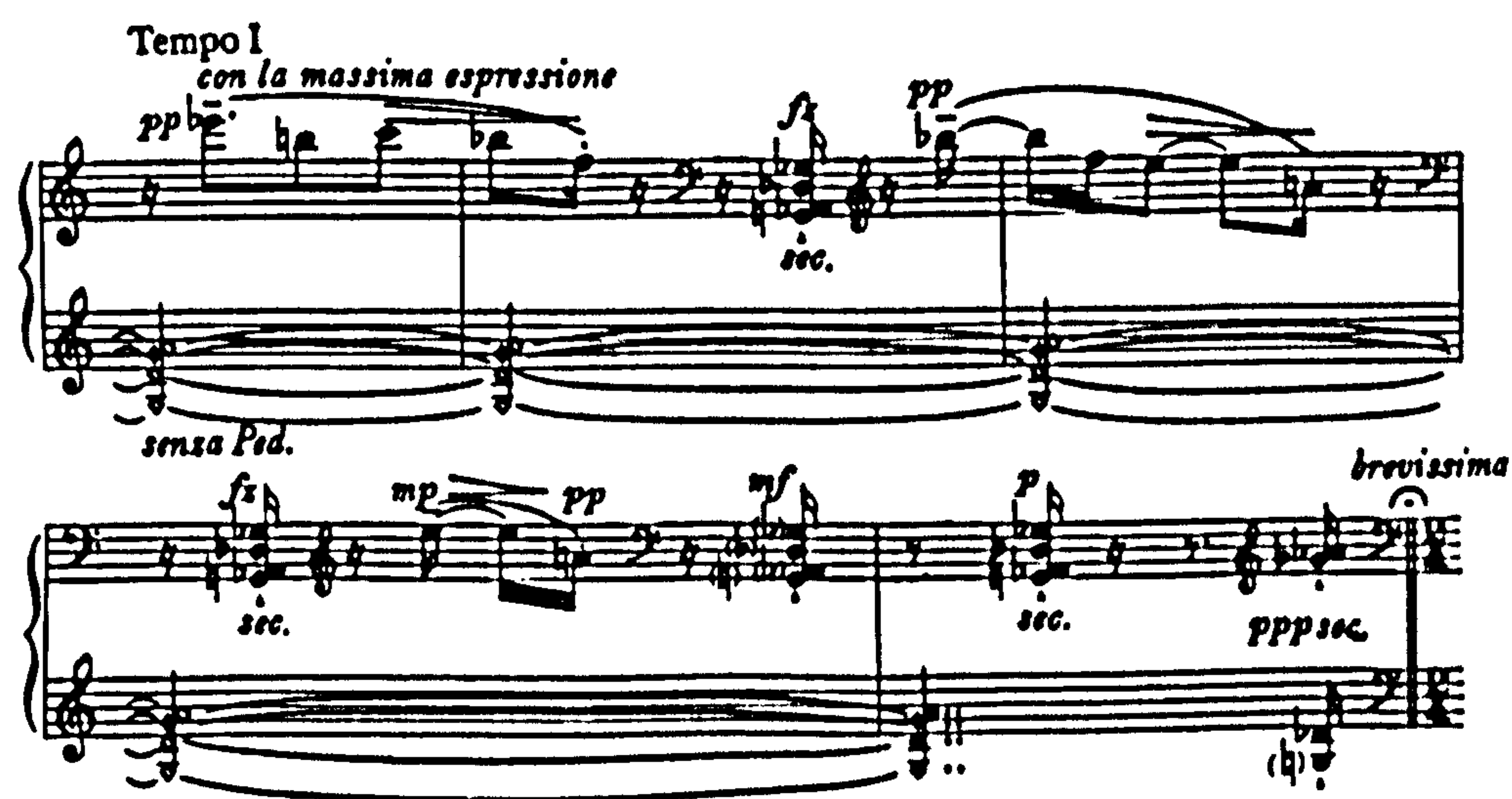
The final two variations of the *Nine Variations* present an immediate slowing in pace. The pattern of chordal treatment juxtaposed with fragments of note-row presentation continues, with melodic lines, in a sense, struggling to retain a presence. Diminution is used again to create a malleable sense to the metre, with broken chords progressing to become chords and a repetitive E in bar 12 adding momentum to the marked *accelerando* (Ex. 5.30). At the



**Ex. 5.30: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 8, bars 12 to 13**



**Ex. 5.31: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 8, bars 18 to 22**



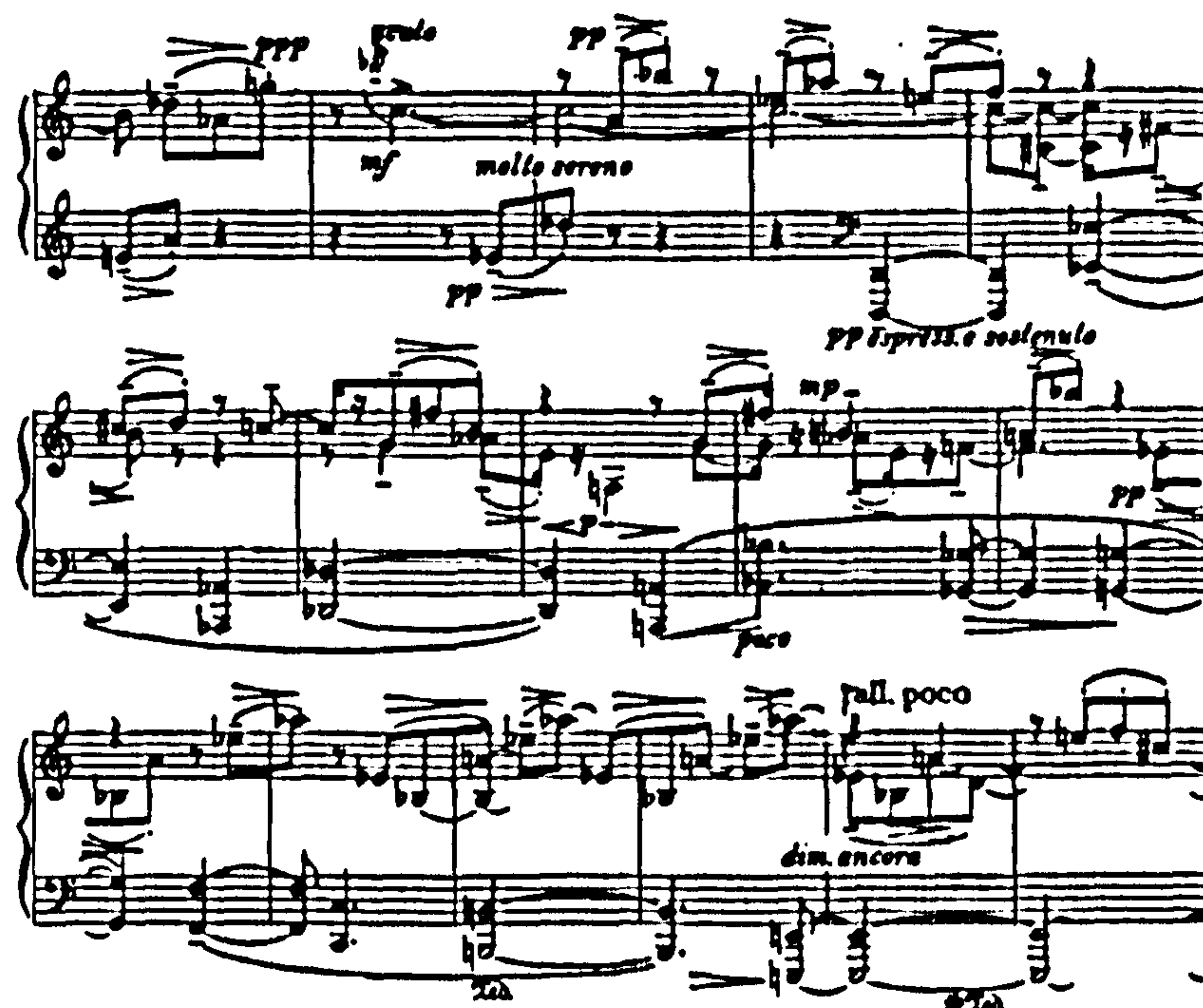
350

of the note-row occurs in sustained octaves in the left hand from bar 33, before a gentle chordal representation of the note-row concludes the work (Ex. 5.33).

Ex. 5.32: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 9, bars 1 to 9



Ex. 5.33: *Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36 – movement 9, bars 30 to 45

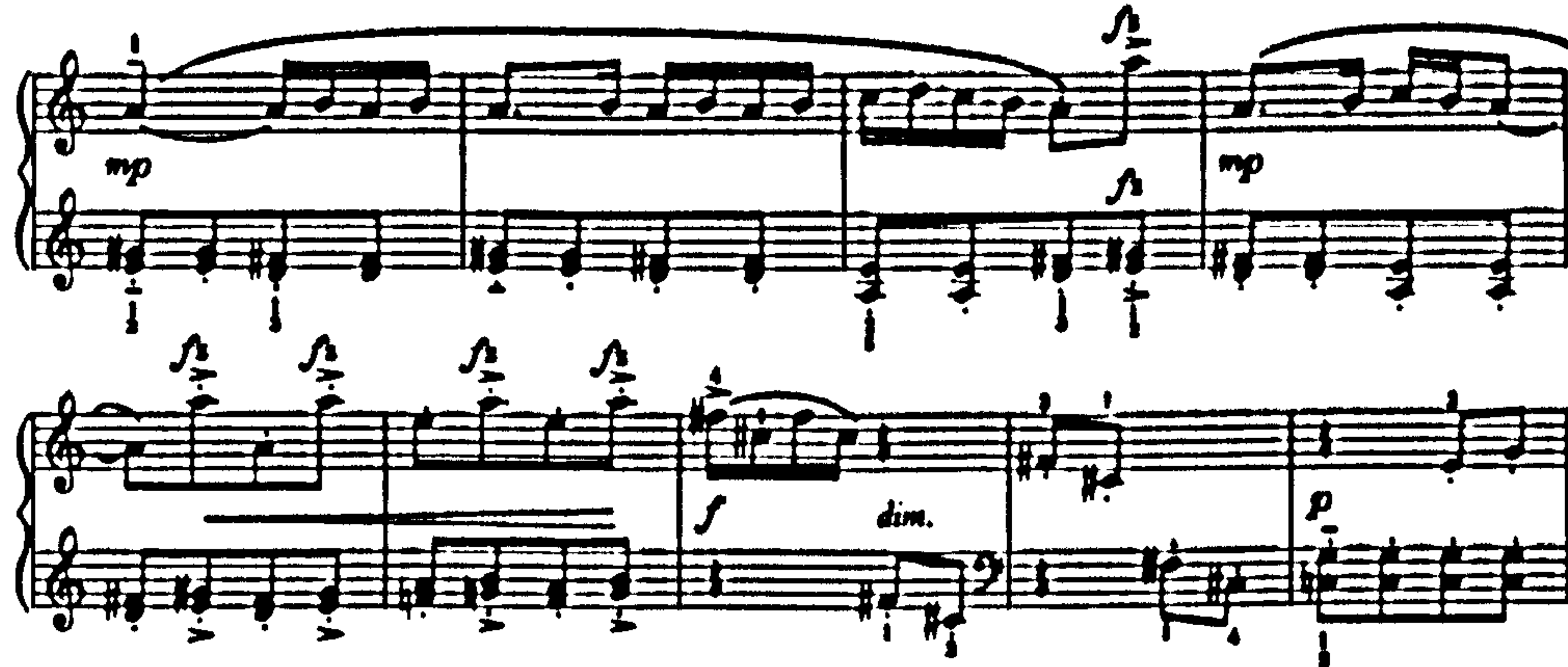


Of the three miniatures, *Jack-in-the-Box* is perhaps the most interesting and most vivid depiction, although all three appropriately illustrate their titles. The somewhat lethargic mood of *Dreaming* is as suggested by the title – although an undercurrent of slight tension within the work gently implies that dreams are not always entirely pleasant – while *Carol* is suggestive of a song-like mood. The *Jack-in-the-Box* is characterised by obvious traits: leaps of an octave or, later on in the piece, a seventh portray the Jack leaping out of the box, with the falling figures that follow suggest it being pushed back down (Ex. 5.34). Gentle increases in tension achieved by accumulative rising figures heighten the anticipation. Its



chromatic nature and some passages of difficulty such as at the final few bars of the work, would make this a work for a more advanced young player (Ex. 5.35).

Ex. 5.34: *Jack-in-the-Box* (1959) – bars 9 to 17



Ex. 5.35: *Jack-in-the-Box* (1959) – bars 40 to 43



### Chamber and Instrumental Music

The genres of chamber and instrumental music from this period are represented by a significant body of four works: the *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 composed in the first half of 1957; the *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 and *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35, written between 1958 and 1959; and the *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* – the final work of 1959. Of the four works, three are substantial, the *String Quartet*, the *Piano Quintet*, and the *Partita*. The *Quartet* and *Quintet* are both in four movements and are around 20 and 29 minutes in length respectively. The *Partita* has the proportions of a sonata, and is in three movements, also of around 20 minutes in length. The *Nocturne* is around five minutes in

length. Of the various movements used by Leighton in these works, there are one or two typical titles that Leighton has used a number of times before: the *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* has a *Scherzo* and a *Passacaglia*, while the *Partita* also contains a *Scherzo* as well as an *Elegy*. The *String Quartet No. 2* has titles for two of its four movements, the *Marcia Lento*, not used before by Leighton, and an *Epilogo* used once before in the *Violin Concerto Opus 12*.

Of the four works in this period, Leighton wrote programme notes for two. A substantial note for the *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* reads as follows:

The texture is mainly contrapuntal, and when the treatment is not antiphonal, the piano is often given a single line within the string texture.

The first movement is modest in dimensions and its material (particularly the motto C D E flat D flat) is not fully worked out until the finale. The mood is one of restlessness (opening theme on unison strings) and the agitation grows through a transition passage, leading to a secondary idea marked '*più dolce e grazioso*'. The middle section consists of a single extended paragraph in which counterpoint of rhythm adds to the feeling of development. An extended *coda* in moderate tempo returns to the restraint of the opening, using almost entirely the descending sequential figure of the second subject.

The slow movement is lyrical and elegiac. Solo 'cello announces the theme, and there is a contrapuntal middle section punctuated by a rhythmic figure (on the piano) which grows in dimensions as the movement proceeds.

The *Scherzo* is exuberant and rhythmic, with a *Cantabile* second theme heard first on the piano. In the middle section *pizzicato* strings accompany the rapid figuration on the piano and then vice versa. The *Cantabile* theme returns in triumph at the end.

The *Passacaglia* returns to the motive of the first movement, which is presented first in a series of entries on strings. Five variants follow, though the effect is one of a continuous paragraph, gaining in speed and tension all the time. The piano leads off in a final fugue and eventually against the fugal figuration (and in a different tempo) the piano introduces a slower tune, this time a majorish version of the motto. The chord of C major makes clear the basic tonality of the whole work.<sup>17</sup>

A shorter note exists also for the *Partita for Violoncello and Piano*:

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<sup>17</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).



The opening *Elegy* is an intense lyrical movement with two distinct themes and a final mysterious section in the manner of a slow march. This is followed by a brilliant and energetic *Scherzo* which is entirely dominated by the opening motive heard first on the piano, while the final movement, *Theme and Variations*, is more extended and carries the main emotional weight of the work. A bell-like theme, constructed mainly of fourths, is followed by variations which bear the titles – *Allegro inquieto*, *Ostinato* (a kind of *Passacaglia*), *March*, *Appassionato*, *Waltz*, and finally *Chorale*; in this last variation the bell-like texture of the theme is developed and enhanced.<sup>18</sup>

As well as – and, to an extent, in place of – the solo piano, both chamber and instrumental music have become vehicles for Leighton in introducing and experimenting with new techniques of musical development. The reduction in the constant stream of piano works from earlier in his career has determined this, although in all the chamber and instrumental works featured in this period, the influence of the piano maintains a strong presence, and three of the four works contain the piano in their scoring.

As expected the *Quartet* and *Quintet* are an important and an ideal medium for contrapuntal writing. There are clear links between the two works, beginning with their very openings, where both introduce a four-note figure based on the BACH theme. This theme had been employed a number of times before by Leighton, but most notably in the *Fantasia on the Name BACH* Opus 29. The *Quartet* uses a theme that is the equivalent of BAHIC, while the *Quintet* introduces AHCB (Ex. 5.36i & ii).

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<sup>18</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).

Ex. 5.36i: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 1, bars 1 to 4

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Cello

*molto espress.*  
*pp*  
*molto espress.*  
*molto espress.*

Ex. 5.36ii: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 1, bars 1 to 5

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Piano

*Allegro con moto*  
*p*  
*espress. ma sotto voce*  
*p*  
*espress. ma sotto voce*  
*p*  
*espress. ma sotto voce*  
*p*  
*espress. ma sotto voce*  
*Allegro con moto*

In both works this short figure represents the beginning of a theme that becomes pivotal to the first movement and the work as a whole, influencing most of the melodic material. Cyclical elements that result from this are obvious, particularly in the final movement of the *Quintet* (*Passacaglia*), where the repetitive theme to be subsequently varied is based on the AHCB of the first movement (Ex. 5.37). Despite the plethora of contrapuntal writing in the *Quartet* and *Quintet* there are no fugues or even sections of writing that could strictly be termed fugal: at this point within Leighton's music, full-scale fugues still remain fairly scarce.



Ex. 5.37: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 4, bars 1 to 5



In contrast, unison writing brings a focus to the beginning of the *Quintet* and is used at various other junctures throughout the work, and often at points of intensity, for example from bar 222 of the *Scherzo* movement and at the crux of the final, *Passacaglia*, movement as the string parts converge towards the final bars of the piece (Ex. 5.38). The *Quartet*, however, has only one short section of unison writing, although used in a similar manner, bringing focus to the beginning of a movement – in this case the *scherzo*-like third movement (Ex. 5.39). Unison writing is also a feature between the right and left hands of the piano in the *Quintet*, mostly at points of climax, for example, towards the first and early climax of the third, *Scherzo*, movement from bar 42, and at a similar place in the *Passacaglia* movement, also in the *Quintet*, from bar 27.

Ex. 5.38: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 4, bars 325 to 337



Ex. 5.39: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 3, bars 1 to 4



When compared to Leighton's *String Quartet No. 1* Opus 32, discussed in the previous chapter, the second *Quartet* is more varied in its use of texture, and he appears to be much



more aware of the capabilities of the string quartet medium in this later work. While there is much counterpoint from the opening bars there is also a more definite orchestral sense to some of the techniques employed by Leighton. The combination of individual rhythmic and melodic qualities, found in the separate instrumental lines of the quartet, form a robust and diverse consistency. Apart from the diversity of overall textures of particular sections, there are a number of portions in which each individual instrument of the quartet has an autonomous characteristic, creating a generally rich consistency. Similar results can also be observed where Leighton employs two individual parts played concurrently while the other two instruments are in unison, creating a third distinctive thread – a technique he uses with a number of combinations of the four instruments (Ex. 5.40).

Ex. 5.40: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 1, bars 141 to 147



This independence of musical line can be observed close to the beginning of the *Quartet* from bar 17, where the syncopated *pizzicato* cello chords accompany the three individual violin and viola lines before converging at the *declamato* section (Ex. 5.41). Further examples include periods of intensity such as that found from bar 53 of the *Marcia Lenta* second movement (Ex. 5.42), and from bar 41 of the *Epilogo*, where similar *pizzicato* cello chords are the basis of the texture (Ex. 5.43).

Ex. 5.41: *String Quartet No. 2 Opus 33* – movement 1, bars 16 to 21

This musical score excerpt shows four staves of music. The top staff (Violin I) has a melodic line with many slurs and ties. The second staff (Violin II) contains a series of sixteenth-note passages with 'Dim.' (diminuendo) markings. The third staff (Viola) also features sixteenth-note patterns. The bottom staff (Cello/Double Bass) has a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern with 'Pizz.' (pizzicato) markings. The music is in a minor key, indicated by the key signature.

Ex. 5.42: *String Quartet No. 2 Opus 33* – movement 2, bars 53 to 58

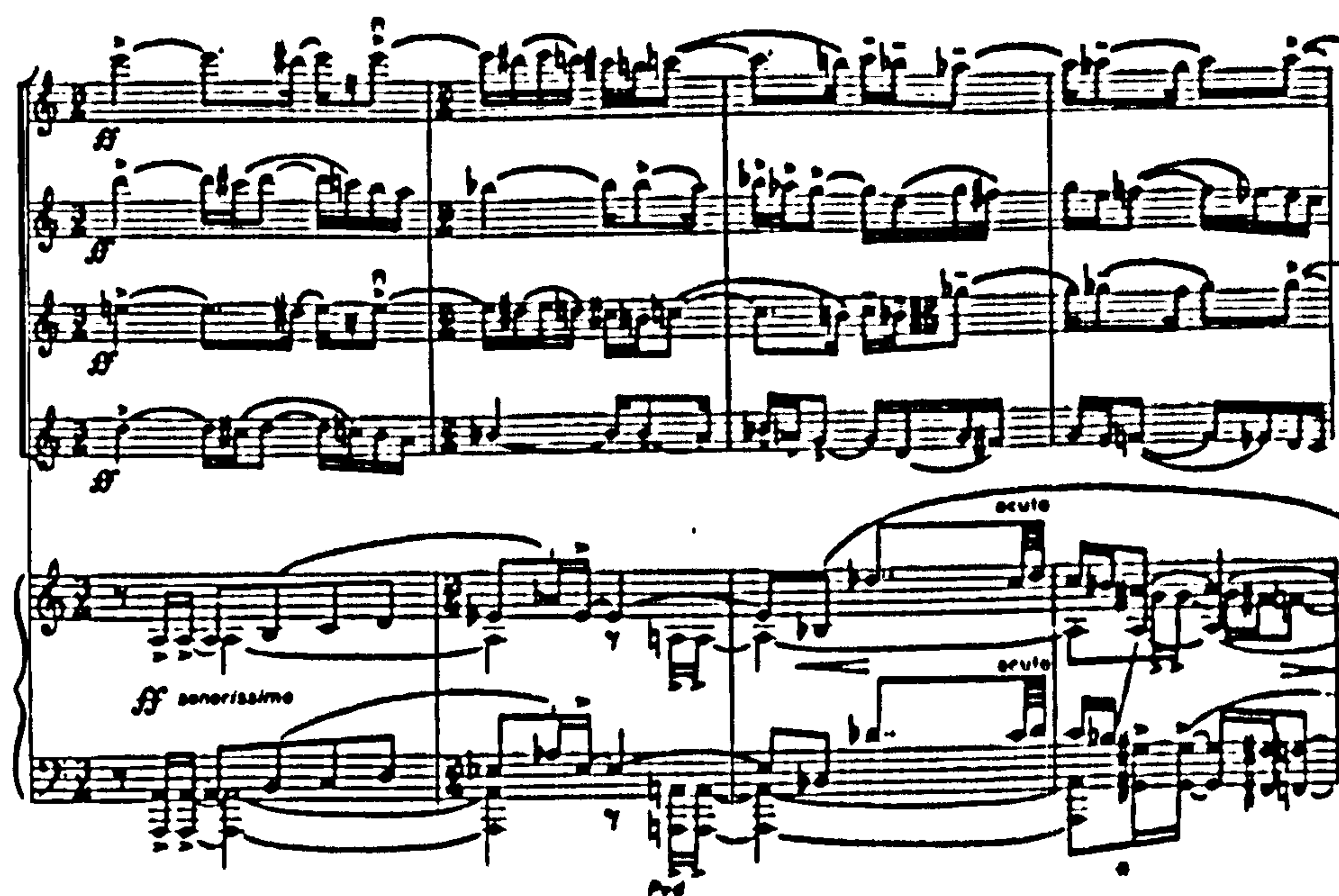
This musical score excerpt shows four staves of music. The top staff (Violin I) has a melodic line with many slurs and ties. The second staff (Violin II) contains a series of sixteenth-note passages with 'Allegro' and 'Allegretto' markings. The third staff (Viola) also features sixteenth-note patterns. The bottom staff (Cello/Double Bass) has a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern with 'Tutta Forza' (with all force) markings. The music is in a minor key, indicated by the key signature.



Ex. 5.43: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 4, bars 39 to 50

Pairings of parts similar to those Leighton uses in his choral music can be observed in the string parts of both the *Quartet* and the *Quintet* with two-part (or three-part in the *Quintet*) counterpoint regularly created with this technique. The pairings used by Leighton can mostly be seen to consist of first violin with viola and second violin with cello in comparison with the regular choral texture of soprano with tenor and alto with bass, each pair having a similar range an octave apart, and a specific effect being attained as a result. A notable example of this practice can be seen in the second movement of the *Quintet*, from bar 61, where a simultaneous and similar arrangement can be seen between the right and left hand of the piano (Ex. 5.44). Between each pair, unison writing is not always observed, and where this is not the case a symmetrical contrary motion figure often exists between the two instruments; a notable example of this occurs from bar 85 in the first movement of the *Quartet*, where the alternative pairing of first violin with second violin and viola with cello can be seen with this mirror technique (Ex.5.45)

Ex. 5.44: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 2, bars 61 to 64



Ex. 5.45: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 1, bars 83 to 88



The opportunities for rhythmical and textural complexity are greater than in Leighton's orchestral works, with the smaller mediums and number of players increasing virtuosic capabilities in the *Quartet*, *Quintet*, *Partita* and *Nocturne*. In the third movement of the quartet, the *scherzo*-like rhythms of the movement are subject to close imitative writing at a period from bar 207, with a short section of an almost chaotic nature (Ex. 5.46), while the *Quintet* displays further examples of rhythmic complexity, with constantly changing syncopation that is rarely regular for any significant period, such as from bar 117 of the first movement



(Ex. 5.47). The intricacies of the *Partita* are evident from the opening bars, with a trio formed in the individual three lines of the piano and cello (Ex. 5.48). This trio construction continues throughout a good portion of the *Partita* making it a particularly dense work.

Ex. 5.46: *String Quartet No. 2* Opus 33 – movement 3, bars 207 to 214



Ex. 5.47: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 1, bars 117 to 120



Ex. 5.48: *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35 – movement 1, bars 1 to 3

Violoncello: Lento, molto sostenuto  $\text{♩} = 48$

Piano: acutissimo e sempre simile, p molto tenuto

Piano: ff, dim., p

Violoncello: p

Piano: con Ped. tempo giusto e ritmico, sempre simile

The *Nocturne* is more colouristic, descriptive and expressive in terms of texture, and rather less clearly defined than the *Partita*. Of all these works it provides some of the most lyrical music in both the violin and piano parts. The five-note theme is used most obviously in this work compared to the three others of this genre, although the statements are generally fragmentary. There is little in terms of syncopation beyond the gentle dissonant piano part of the opening, although there is a mild increase of this technique as tension begins to grow from bar 20 (Ex. 5.49). A languishing improvisatory character is also evident in the range, rhythm and changing speed of the violin part, especially towards the climax of the work (Ex. 5.50). There is a suggestion of sonata form within this work, the climax concluding with a short cadenza, during which *accelerandos* are created with diminution, followed by a return to the mood, speed and texture of the opening to conclude the work.

Ex. 5.49: *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* (1959) – bars 19 to 21

Violin: mf sempre sostenuto

Piano: p sempre sostenuto espress.



Ex. 5.50: *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* (1959) – bars 38 to 42

Leighton's awareness of the possibilities within the string quartet are translated effectively into the *Quintet*, the addition of a piano creating a significant number of extra opportunities as well as increasing familiarity of techniques within this chamber form. The flexibility created for the strings within the quintet as a result of the piano in particular allow for a greater use of unison writing (mentioned above) and a greater number of varied textures. The piano effectively allows for up to four extra musical lines in the texture, or in places even more – so as not to over-complicate the music, Leighton mostly makes use of two of these available parts. The piano allows for a greater use of unison writing between the four string instruments, which is first seen near the opening of the work, but effectively employed from bar 77 of the opening movement (Ex. 5.51).

Ex. 5.51: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 1, bars 77 to 80



The depth of textures now available are demonstrated by the *feroce* section heard from bar 142 of the first movement (Ex. 5.52), while the piano's ability to cover a wide range is seen to enhance the flexibility of the string quartet from bar 293 of the *Scherzo* movement.

Ex. 5.52: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 1, bars 142 to 146



The treatment of the repetitive and varied theme of the *Passacaglia* in the final movement of the *Quintet* owes much to that of the orchestral *Passacaglia, Chorale and Fugue* Opus 18,



discussed above. Initially it is subject to imitative counterpoint in the strings, before becoming transposed in the piano in an introduction section that leads up to the main melodic subject of the work introduced at bar 18. The constant development of the *passacaglia* theme that characterises the earlier Opus 18 *Passacaglia* is also present in this work; the theme evolves into new material and becomes hidden and eventually lost from the texture. As in the orchestral *Passacaglia* it returns in an obvious and clear statement towards the end of the movement – in this case it is the piano that reintroduces it in augmentation, with some of its most sustained chordal writing that colours the remainder of the work from bar 235 (Ex. 5.53).

Ex. 5.53: *Quintet for Piano and String Quartet* Opus 34 – movement 4, bars 235 to 242



While being considerably different in length, the *Partita* and the *Nocturne* are similar in a number of ways beyond the scoring of piano and solo string instrument. The chromatic element of both works is denser than that of the *Quartet* and *Quintet* and serial influences are clearly more important in the later two works of this period. While this is so, the urgency and tension present from the opening of the *Partita* is far more obvious than the reflective

calm of the *Nocturne*. The wide variety of piano textures and colours in particular link the two works, as well as the rhapsodic nature of much of the cello and violin lines, which is most evident in the *Elegy* that opens the *Partita* as well as in the *Nocturne*.

The *Theme and Variations* that close the *Partita* also demonstrate close links with the serial piano works, the *Variations* Opus 30 and the *Nine Variations* Opus 36, the latter of which was composed alongside the *Partita* between 1958 and 1959. As the *Theme* is introduced, the interval of the fourth is a defining characteristic as a note-row is stated – with some repetition – amid a pedal A in the opening bars of the piano introduction, directly comparable to the opening of both of the piano works (Ex. 5.54 and see Ex. 4.40 and 5.21).

Ex. 5.54: *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35 – movement 3, bars 1 to 11

The musical score for Ex. 5.54 is for the third movement of the *Partita for Violoncello and Piano*, Opus 35, bars 1 to 11. The tempo is marked 'Adagio molto sostenuto'. The score is written for Violoncello (V) and Piano (P). The piano part is marked 'pp molto espress. ma calmo' and 'sempre con Ped.'. The cello part is marked 'pp' and 'espress.'. The score shows a complex texture with many notes and rests, including a prominent pedal point in the piano.

The nature of the six variations that follow also show further links with the various textures experimented with in the piano works, in which the main theme of the movement that is to be varied becomes distorted and disguised. As stated in the above programme note, most of the variations have descriptive titles – *Ostinato*, *March*, *Waltz*, and *Chorale*, which are



variations two, three, five and six respectively – that give a clue as to the nature of each miniature, and, as before, there is a combination between the variations being joined together and significant silences between them.

The final variation of the *Theme and Variations, Chorale*, typically brings decorum and a settled nature to the movement, Leighton choosing an original chorale once more, logically based on the *Theme*. This section restores clarity to the *Theme*, towards the conclusion of the arch-shaped movement. The *Scherzo* second movement of the *Partita* makes obvious use of the AHCB version of the BACH theme – which is a major feature of the musical material of the *Quintet* – transposed and combined with a falling tritone (Ex. 5.55). The shape of the piano introduction is typical of the opening of Leighton's *scherzo* movements, with the main melodic material being introduced, and repeated, before a short period of syncopation and a more straightforward and rapid sustained figure leading to the entry of another instrument or part (see Ex. 5.55).

Ex. 5.55: *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35 – movement 2, bars 1 to 8

Allegro molto e precipitoso  $\text{♩} = 120$

• must always be very sharp and crisp

The *Nocturne* also has links with Leighton's two sets of piano variations; the opening of the fourth variation of the *Nine Variations* Opus 36 is almost identical to that of the *Nocturne*, the right hand of the piano part, being adopted by the violin in the later work (Ex. 5.56 and see Ex. 5.25).

Ex. 5.56: *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* (1959) – bars 1 to 4

The use of grace notes in substantial falling and rising intervals further on into the work is also reminiscent of the final variation of the *Nine Variations*, and the opening bar of the *Partita* (Ex. 5.57 and see Ex. 5.32 and Ex. 5.48). At the climax of the *Nocturne*, the dissonant chords of the piano call to mind the peak of the sixth variation of the *Nine Variations*, and the closing bars of the *Fuga* of the *Variations* Opus 30 (see Ex. 5.50 and Ex. 5.28), while the opening of the *Ostinato* second variation of the *Partita*'s final movement is also similar to the main fugal theme of the same variation in the piano work.

Ex. 5.57: *Nocturne for Violin and Piano* (1959) – bars 16 to 18



As in the orchestral works of this period, repetitive accompaniment figures are vital pillars in the construction of Leighton's chamber and instrumental music, and they similarly change and evolve, some being retained for longer periods than others, but rarely returning later on in a movement or work. These repetitive figures, which can be traced as far back as the ostinatos from his early published piano works, have developed to the point that they become patterns as opposed to strict ostinatos, and are characterised by unpredictable nature and their lack of regularity. With the intricate trio qualities of the *Partita* short rhythmical or melodic ideas that recur are important in instilling stability within the work as a whole. The following example from the *Scherzo* second movement of the *Partita* displays how frequently they can change, and how widely they vary within a short period of time (Ex. 5.58).

Ex. 5.58: *Partita for Violoncello and Piano* Opus 35 – movement 2, bars 28 to 35



## Choral Music

There are five works that come under the choral music genre in this period from 1956 to 1960, ranging from three unaccompanied works (*Nativitie*, *In Honorem B. W. G. Rose D. Mus.*

and *God's Grandeur*) to one work accompanied by organ (*Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense*) and one major work for soloist, chorus and orchestra (*The Light Invisible*). Over this period, these choral works represent a regular stream of compositions for the genre, although in looking at Leighton's output as a whole, those choral works that fall under the category of Church music to be used liturgically, during this period and throughout his career, can often be classed as relatively small in scale, and often miniatures. This isn't always the case though: the *Mass* Opus 44 composed in 1964 for Herrick Bunney and the Edinburgh University Singers is particularly extensive at around 25 minutes in length.

Of these five works, *God's Grandeur*, *The Light Invisible* and the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, are most representative of Leighton's more individual style discussed in the last chapter as having developed while at Leeds, in particular in *The Birds* Opus 28, the *Five Studies* Opus 22 and the *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* Opus 24. The carol, *Nativity*, and the short *In Honorem B. W. G. Rose D.Mus.* are more akin to the earlier *Three Carols* Opus 25 with both having similar scoring to the earlier carols; *Nativity* is for soprano solo and SSATB chorus, while the latter is scored for baritone solo and SATB chorus.

The earliest of the three works that epitomise Leighton's newly individual style, *God's Grandeur*, is introduced by way of a significant and dissonant statement, typical of some of his more recent works. It is wholly appropriate to the nature of the text by Gerard Manley Hopkins, and the impact of this piece as a whole would most likely not have been as successful if it had been subject to his earlier milder musical language. The full implication



of the opening statement is brought to life in the most vivid way by Leighton, the homophonic opening phrases – ‘The world is charged with the grandeur of God/It will flame out, like shining from shook foil’ – containing only chords with a dissonant aspect, and no root position triadic chords (Ex. 5.59). In the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* the simplicity of much of Leighton’s dissonance can be seen from the opening bars; the organ introduction of the *Magnificat* provides a prime example of this, with only one note that doesn’t belong to a triad, or one note different from the triad, creating considerable dissonance that is characteristic of Leighton’s style (Ex. 5.60).

Ex. 5.59: *God’s Grandeur* (1957) – bars 1 to 4

Andante sostenuto                      largamente

SOPRANO  
The world is charged with the grandeur, the grandeur of

ALTO  
The world is charged with the grandeur, the grandeur of  
largamente

TENOR  
The world is charged with the grandeur, the grandeur of

BASS  
The world is charged with the grandeur, the grandeur of

Ex. 5.60: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense 1959* – *Magnificat* bars 1 to 6

Allegro molto e ritmico

SOPRANO  
My soul doth magnify

ALTO  
My soul doth magnify

TENOR  
My soul doth magnify

BASS  
My soul doth magnify

ORGAN  
Man.

In Leighton's limited writings on his own music there are descriptive passages on two of the five works in this group. The first is a short narrative of the *Nunc Dimittis* of the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*:

The quiet opening phrase sung by the choir unaccompanied contains the melodic and harmonic features of the movement as a whole, smooth lines of a fairly chromatic nature colliding to produce intense seconds and major minor dissonance.

The main section consists of a single sustained paragraph in which the contrapuntal lines are constantly expanded, and a rising tension results from an ever more complex interplay between voices and organ. The words "to be a light" are insisted on in a gradual build up (using material from the *Magnificat* of the same service), but the climax is not reached until a final cadence on organ alone.

The Gloria, in complete contrast, is a light dance-like section ending with a more mystical treatment of the words "world without end. Amen".<sup>19</sup>

The second existing note is a substantial note on *The Light Invisible* that appeared in the programme of the first performance at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford:

Part I has three main sections. The opening theme on the horn (particularly its first four notes) forms the basis of a good deal of the thematic material of the work. After a slow introduction the chorus presents the terrible vision of Jeremiah. The middle section (tenor solo) uses the words of Psalm 130 in an attempt to project the figure of Man against this background; and in the final section the chorus join in an extended "Lament" (Lamentations of Jeremiah) – a continuation of the prophet's vision of desolation.

Part II is in four sections. The opening tenor solo forms perhaps the core of the work; the key-words being "darkness" and "dark places".

The chorus enters in a transition passage to question the whole basis of the lamentation. "Who is he...?" This is interrupted by a quick rhythmic section. In twentieth century terms the poet asks "Where is the life we have lost in living?" At the moment of climax however, the tenor soloist re-enters with a short unaccompanied recitative, and here begins the final section of the work. ("The Lord who created must wish us to create".)

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<sup>19</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense*, (unpublished programme note, date unknown).



The word "Light", heard first in the opening solo section of Part II returns now, and is quietly echoed by female voices. The final Hymn to "The Light Invisible" takes the form of a free chorale against triplet accompaniment in the orchestra.<sup>20</sup>

*The Light Invisible* represents one of Leighton's most pivotal works. The fact that this substantial work was first performed at the Three Choirs Festival displays a certain level of recognition of – and confidence in – his music at one of the highest levels in his own country, for a relatively young composer. Musically, it is the first work since *Hippolytus* Opus 8 for this scoring of full orchestra, soloist and chorus. It is significant that Leighton had not attempted anything of this scale since the student work that won him the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and as such, this is a milestone in his development. In the same way that *Hippolytus* was a summing up of his musical style and abilities towards the end of his time as an undergraduate and at that point in his development, *The Light Invisible* encompasses his now individual and recognisable musical language using one of the largest canvases available to him. It is not clear whether or not the subject of the text was suggested by someone else or if it was entirely his own idea, but it is likely that Leighton chose the specific texts himself, having had thoughts about this work before its inception, according to the above programme note. The texts themselves complement each other particularly well despite being a mixture of biblical texts and poetry from a near contemporary, and the depth and variety of subject allows for a balanced and diverse piece of music on a large scale.

Imitative writing is still important in Leighton's choral textures, although at this stage he still does not choose to stretch the abilities of a choir with any extended periods of counterpoint; *The Light Invisible* provides the most extended period of this style of writing in

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<sup>20</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *The Light Invisible: Sinfonia Sacra* Opus 16, (programme note, Three Choirs Festival, Hereford Cathedral, (9 September 1958).

his choral music to this point, in the lead up to one of the main climaxes of Part I (Ex. 5.61).

Ex. 5.61: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 278 to 285

*Nativitie* flits between homophonic sections and short sections of imitative writing, on the whole determined by the text; the imitative entries are used to emphasise a word or phrase within the poetry – effectively a type of pause within the music, for example the opening word of the piece, ‘Immensity’, which focuses the beginning of the work, covering five bars. *In Honorem*, which is essentially a work for entertainment and presumably intended to be performed once at the appropriate occasion, is also subject to speech rhythms and the occasional emphasis of words, particularly in the anguish displayed at ‘he goes’, which is subject to dissonance, followed by a reassurance as the music resolves at ‘but he stays near’ (Ex. 5.62).



**Ex. 5.62: *In Honorem B.W.G. Rose D.Mus* (1957) – bars 21 to 29**

Handwritten musical score for "The Song of the Lark". The score is written on four systems of staves, each with a vocal line (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines.

**System 1:**

- Soprano (S):** Sing a par - Ting song, he goes, he
- Alto (A):** Sing a par - Ting song, he goes, he
- Tenor (T):** Sing a par - Ting song, he goes, he
- Bass (B):** Sing a par - Ting song, he goes, he goes, he

**System 2:**

- Soprano (S):** goes, though he stays near.
- Alto (A):** goes, though he stays near.
- Tenor (T):** goes, though he stays near.
- Bass (B):** goes, though he stays near.

The use of the orchestra in *The Light Invisible*, due to its sheer size, is much more symphonic than that of *Veris Gratia* and *The Birds*, with a greater number of options in terms of orchestral colour when compared with the limitations of the scoring within these earlier works. In this way, the status of this work as an amalgam of his musical style to this point across each genre is evident. Leighton's fondness for a solo horn is found at the very opening of *The Light Invisible*, previously employed in the slow movements of his first piano concerto, the violin concerto and later the *Symphony No. 1*, the exposed opening line of *The Light Invisible* presents a note-row, with a few repetitions (Ex. 5.63).

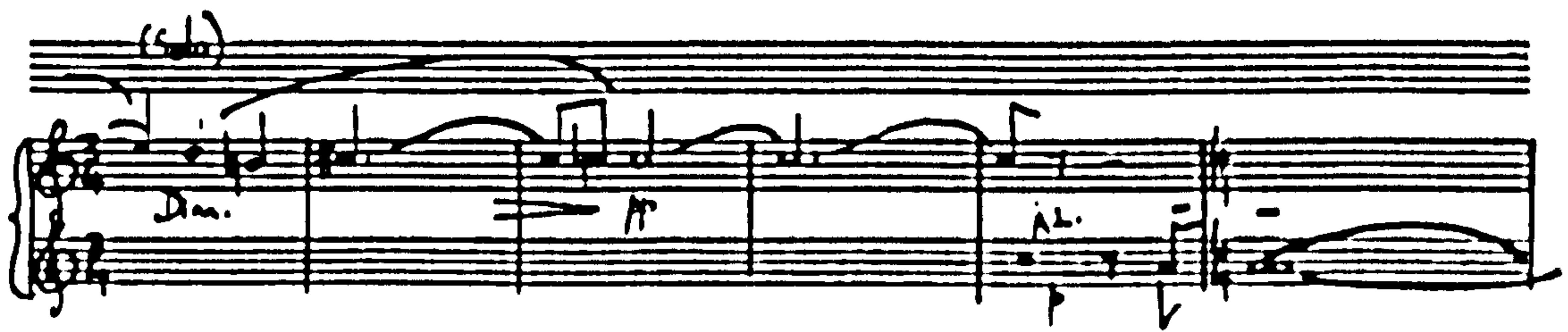
**Ex. 5.63: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 1 to 12, solo horn part**

LEONARD L. MALKIN COMPOSER

I Solo

pp molto ritardando

L. Malkin



There are a number of points in *The Light Invisible* where the orchestra is at the forefront of the musical texture, and Leighton uses these opportunities to display some of the vital features of his musical language not employed in his choral writing. While there are a few short periods of more extended counterpoint in the choral parts of this work, the orchestra provides much of the counterpoint to be observed in the work, found as both an accompaniment to the choir and soloist and on its own with no voices.

From the earliest entry of the strings in bar eight of the first part, contrapuntal writing is obvious, with the opening note-row being presented over three parts with imitative entries. While these textures persist throughout the work in the orchestra, some of the more notable sections of counterpoint can be observed in the orchestral interlude preceding the first entry of the tenor soloist with the text of Psalm 130 (Ex. 5.64), and at perhaps one of the most concentrated periods towards the final section of the second part of the work, between chorus and orchestra, again in anticipation of a solo tenor entry.

With the use of an orchestra alongside his choral writing, such as in *The Light Invisible*, word painting and emphasis could become particularly enhanced, as well as providing the most vivid and powerful possibilities. Realisation of the text and its meaning could be more vividly represented with all the various colours available. The image of empty darkness represented by the opening text from Jeremiah, 'I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without



form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light', is portrayed by a soft, constant and chromatic semiquaver rhythm, accompanied by a static pedal in the horns and low strings that is reinforced with the combination of a persistent but uneven rhythm, providing early tension.

Ex. 5.64: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 161 to 165

The image displays a musical score for a section of 'The Light Invisible' Opus 16, Part I, bars 161 to 165. The score is written for a large ensemble, including Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, and Piano/Contra Bass. The notation is complex, featuring many beamed sixteenth notes and a dense texture. A 'piano' marking is visible at the beginning of the piano part. The score is arranged in two systems, with the first system containing five staves and the second system containing three staves. The overall mood is one of intense, chromatic movement.

The mood changes as, at the *Quasi Allegro*, the tenors and basses of the chorus enter with the text 'I beheld the mountains, and lo! they trembled', at which point the texture changes to punctuate each phrase as a repetitive syncopation is introduced by the timpani, wind and horns (Ex. 5.65). There are too many further examples of word painting throughout this work of around 35 minutes in length to mention them all, although it is worth noting a few more examples. In the first part '[...] at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger' is

represented by a chaotic section in which there is a struggle between the time signatures 3/4 and 12/16, this short section concluding with the first tutti of the work (Ex. 5.66). Prior to this section the thin scoring and reduction in harmonic texture helps to portray the sung text at 'wilderness' and 'broken down'. An element of unpredictability is a feature: as the tenor soloist introduces the opening text of Psalm 130, the anguish of this text is not portrayed perhaps as expected, placed low down in the voice, but in fact relatively high (Ex. 5.67).

Ex. 5.65: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 54 to 57

Ex. 5.66: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 95 to 99



Ex. 5.67: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 170 to 183

The image displays a musical score for a Tenor Solo and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems. The first system is marked 'TENOR SOLO' and 'ff appassionato'. The lyrics 'Out of the deep' are written below the first staff. The second system contains the lyrics 'have I called on-to'. The third system contains the lyrics 'thee, O Lord.' The piano accompaniment is written in the lower staves of each system, featuring complex chordal textures and melodic lines. The Tenor Solo part is written in a single staff at the top of each system, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and phrasing slurs.

Combining a full orchestra with a chorus and soloist contains some considerable challenges to any composer. However, appropriate scoring appears to have come quite naturally to Leighton, having written a good deal of music for voices, both soloists and choirs, and with his own experience of singing within a choir. Sensitive scoring is an important factor in *The Light Invisible*, and the tenor soloist in particular is rarely faced with an impenetrable orchestral texture, unless the nature of the text is deemed appropriate for such writing. Only at one point is the tenor forced to struggle to penetrate the texture of the orchestra: during Psalm 130, at the text 'I look for the Lord', which is sung towards the top of the soloist's range, and is accompanied by loud brass and wind. This cry of desperation has to

defy the orchestra at this point, and the tenor sings a prominent G sharp against the stark A and D sharp in the orchestra (Ex. 5.68). The orchestral tutti is also used sparingly with the choir, the two being found together at a small number of large climaxes, most notably at the conclusion of the first part and towards the end of the second part (Ex. 5.69). The voices are found unaccompanied at various points throughout the work: following a large climax the soloist sings an extended section of *a capella* recitative-style writing in the second part of the work, whilst a large number of short phrases sung by the tenor are unaccompanied.

Ex. 5.68: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 232 to 241

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and orchestral piece. The top system features a vocal line with the lyrics "I look — for the" and an orchestral accompaniment. Above the vocal line, the tempo marking "un poco più largo" is present. The bottom system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Lord," and "my", and the orchestral accompaniment. Above the vocal line, the tempo marking "allarg. poco a poco" is present, followed by "molto espress." in italics. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.



Ex. 5.69: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part II, bars 440 to 443

The musical score for Ex. 5.69 consists of six staves. The top five staves are vocal parts, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are marked 'ardente e sonorissimo' and feature lyrics: 'O Light In - vi - si - ble,'. The piano part is marked 'ff tutta forza' and features a complex, syncopated rhythm with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The score is in 2/4 time and shows bars 440 to 443.

Leighton's complexity is found in abundance in *The Light Invisible*, particularly with the number of instrumental lines and range of colours available within a full orchestra. His use of syncopation is the most complicated of all his works so far, although often providing a constant quaver or semiquaver rhythm between the various parts of the orchestra. This dense complexity is however tempered and balanced with the use of more lyrical and sustained musical lines, particularly in the concurrent choral textures. Different syncopated lines, however, becoming contrasted and combined, provide an orchestral texture not used before by Leighton (Ex. 5.70). Within this complexity, the wind instruments predictably double the strings a good deal, improving the clarity and potency of each separate part; however, in the interests of balanced scoring they present much of their own material individually, often in a fragmentary way.

Ex. 5.70: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 57 to 62

ANCORA PIÙ ANIMATO

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system contains the piano introduction and the beginning of the vocal entry. The piano part is written in E major (one sharp) and features a complex, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The voice part enters in bar 57 with the lyrics "all the bells were high". The tempo marking "ANCORA PIÙ ANIMATO" is written above the piano part in bar 57. The second system continues the piano part and the vocal line. The piano part continues with its complex rhythmic texture, and the vocal line continues with the lyrics "all the bells were high".

The use of the five-note theme from the first piano concerto that had, by this point, given an identity to many of his subsequent works, is an important facet that inextricably links *The Light Invisible* with its composer. The five-note theme is also much in evidence in the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* from this period. However, there is only one example of it, in inversion from the original and chromatically altered, in *God's Grandeur*, the melodic and harmonic language there making ample use of other features of Leighton's style from this



period. There are subtle suggestions of the original rhythm of the five-note theme during *In Honorem*, but *Nativitie* does not appear to use this figure at all, which perhaps further demonstrates their affinity with Leighton's much earlier works.

Examples of the five-note theme in *The Light Invisible* are numerous, but not all overtly obvious. In the opening section of the work, only the rhythm is suggested in the horns and then the strings in a rising figure, before the inversion is used imitatively at bar 22 (Ex. 5.71). Its use is particularly subtle, and the next obvious example is found as a repetitive figure in inversion at bar 189 in the violas, which is adopted by the clarinets (Ex. 5.72). The rhythm of the five-note theme is introduced as a rising figure from bar 199 which recurs frequently (Ex. 5.73). Much later on in part one, from bar 309, the five-note theme forms a repetitive rising and falling figure in the high strings. Leighton combines the various features of his musical language at this point, with this constant semiquaver figure based on the five-note theme, being combined with a double dotted rhythm in the wind and the more lyrical unison and sustained line of the choir.

Ex. 5.71: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 22 to 24



Ex. 5.72 *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 189 to 194

Choir  
Soprano  
Alto  
Tenor  
Bass

Organ

(spoken) C let things come come o. der wall the voice of the just is heard

Ex. 5.73: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part I, bars 195 to 200

Solo Organ

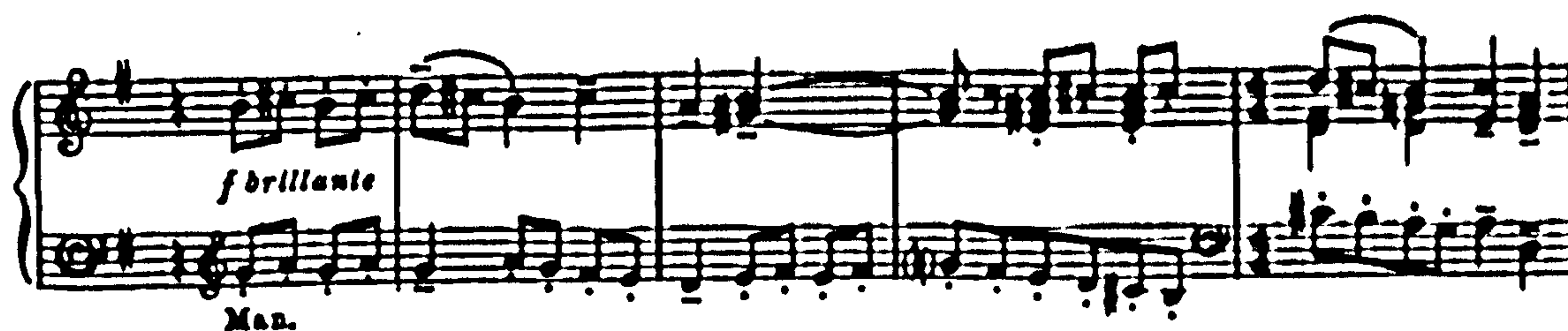
Organ

my heart is full of praise to thee O God

The five-note theme in the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* is mainly reserved for the organ accompaniment where it features prominently, first heard at bar 16 in an extended form and then more obviously at bar 19 at the beginning of the organ interlude (Ex. 5.74).



Ex. 5.74: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense (1959)* – *Magnificat* bars 19 to 23



The only example of the five-note theme in the choral writing of the *Magnificat* is found at the melisma on 'Holy' as late as the doxology. The *Nunc Dimittis* sees a higher number of examples of the five-note theme, although a cyclical element is introduced, the only example in the choral parts being heard at a comparable melisma at 'glory', using a similar but altered rhythm (Ex 5.75). A recurring organ accompaniment figure is made up of the five-note theme and is used in particular to heighten tension as the music builds towards the climax of the main text of the *Nunc Dimittis* (Ex. 5.76).

Ex. 5.75: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense (1959)* – *Nunc Dimittis* bars 27 to 29

Ex. 5.76: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense (1959) – Nunc Dimittis*  
bars 21 to 26

The musical score for 'Nunc Dimittis' (bars 21 to 26) is presented for a four-part vocal choir and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: 'be a light, a light, a light to light - on the Gen - tiles: and to be the'. The tempo is marked 'allarg. poco'. The score is written in G major, 4/4 time. The vocal parts are Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The piano accompaniment is for the right and left hands. The lyrics are: 'be a light, a light, a light to light - on the Gen - tiles: and to be the'. The tempo is marked 'allarg. poco'.

Repetitive figures in Leighton's orchestral accompaniment are important in the extensive proportions of *The Light Invisible*. A sense of tedium that this could easily create is avoided by the number of times the repeated figure is subject to change, and with a general absence of recurring figures. With scoring on this scale, and particularly with the inclusion of a chorus, some sense of stability within the delivery of musical material is essential, while an



over-complexity is also avoided and a lucid structure retained with the use of this technique. Many of these repetitive figures include dissonance or chromatic movement, while most employ an element of syncopation (Ex. 5.77).

Ex. 5.77: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part II, bars 118 to 127

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano ensemble. The vocal part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the staff. The piano accompaniment is written on two staves, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains bars 118 to 124, and the second system contains bars 125 to 127. The lyrics are: "The end - less", "cy - cle of i - dea and ac - tion,". The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, creating a dense texture. The vocal part is more melodic and features some syncopation.

The difference between the orchestral accompaniments of the first and second parts is noticeable – the density of the first part is considerably more than that found in the second, where a more optimistic and lighter mood is evident. From this point of view, the scale of this work can be compared to a plethora of British oratorio works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in particular. The two-part contrasting structure of this work can easily be viewed as influenced by Edward Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and it is more than possible that this and other works of its ilk, in particular William Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* and Herbert Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* had been influential and in the back of Leighton's mind when choosing a suitable text and composing this large-scale work for chorus and

orchestra. The two moods of *The Light Invisible* are not evenly separated: the main subjects are those of darkness and light and the former subject is found in the first part and the opening of the second part, the change towards the subject of light occurring further into the second part. Despite these differences in mood and orchestral texture, however, the repetitive figures are found in all parts of the orchestra at some point throughout most of the work.

Frequent changes of tempo and texture add to a feeling of through-composition in *The Light Invisible*, but also in three other works in this group of five. In Leighton's choral works, as in his other works, the structure has become flexible enough to be able to take further account of the text, support the word painting and add an extra dimension of expression. Often, such as at the opening of *Nativitie*, *In Honorem* and, to an extent, in *God's Grandeur* a sense of strict time is not a factor (Ex. 5.78). Tempos change according to the text and mood of each particular work as appropriate, which is a strong feature of Leighton's later choral works, music being subject to constant development and evolution rather than traditional forms. The texts of each of these works also typically determines the direction and construction of the music, whether or not the pieces are made up of his more musical language or his earlier more derivative style. *Nativitie* is frequently subject to changes of speed, with general switches between tempo providing a measured style to the music, while retaining the strength of the overall structure contained in the harmony.



Ex. 5.78: *Nativitie* (1956) – bars 1 to 7

Molto lento (♩ = 60-100) ma sempre un poco liberamente

1st SOP. Im - men - si - ty

2nd SOP. Im - men -

ALTO Im - men - si - ty

TENOR Im - men - si - ty

BASS Im - men - si - ty

elo - y - sterd. elo - y -

si - ty elo - y sterd in thy

elo - y sterd

elo - y

Each of these five choral works makes full use of Leighton's lyrical abilities; however, the nature of the text of *Nativitie* makes this work particularly demonstrative of this key feature of Leighton's style. The comparisons between this work and Leighton's earlier carols are evident in style and scoring, the expressive quality found within the supple but strong structure, and rich texture (including subtle dissonance) become enhanced with the coherent lyrical lines of both the choir and soloist. The free nature of the soprano soloist from its first entry midway through the carol, sees the interaction with the choir include two different time signatures as the edges become blurred (Ex. 5.79). Lyrical qualities are obvious from the beginning of *In Honorem* as the opening baritone soloist sings a recitative-like verse, reminiscent of the first verse of *An ode on the birth of our Saviour* Opus 25c and

used similarly in the later carols *A Hymn of the Nativity* from 1960 and *Of a rose is all my song* from 1970 (Ex. 5.80i & ii). There is a plethora of examples of lyricism in *The Light Invisible*, often in moments of counterpoint in the voices, such as at bar 373 as the chorus take over from the soloist with the text of the title, 'O light invisible, we worship Thee!'

Ex. 5.79: *Nativitie* (1956) – irregular barring from bar 35

Un poco più mosso  
Tempo giusto e moderato (♩ = ♩)

SOLO

SOPRANO I My Soule, with Thy Faith

jealous gen-e-rall doome. Seest thou, pp sempre

SOPRANO II Seest thou, pp sempre

ALTO jealous gen-e-rall doome. Seest thou, pp sempre

TENOR jealous gen-e-rall doome. Seest thou, pp sempre

BASS jealous gen-e-rall doome. Seest thou, pp sempre

jealous gen e rall doome. Seest thou,

eyes, how he which fills all place, yet none holds him, doth lye?

my Soule, How he doth

my Soule, How he doth

my Soule, How he doth

my Soule, How he doth

Ex. 5.80i: *In Honorem B.W.G Rose D.Mus* (1957) – bars 1 to 7

Grandioso ed un po' liberamente (1. volta) quasi recitativo.

Soutone Solo Sing, Eg-ke-nald, the wie der of your

baton who nineteen summers since From Can came here;



Ex. 5.80ii: *An Ode on the birth of our Saviour* Opus 25c – bars 1 to 13

Moderato ed un poco liberamente

SOPRANO SOLO

In Num-bers, and but these few, I sing Thy Birth, Oh Je - su!

Thou pret-tle Ba-b'le, borne here, With su - p'ra-bun-dant scorn here! Who for Thy

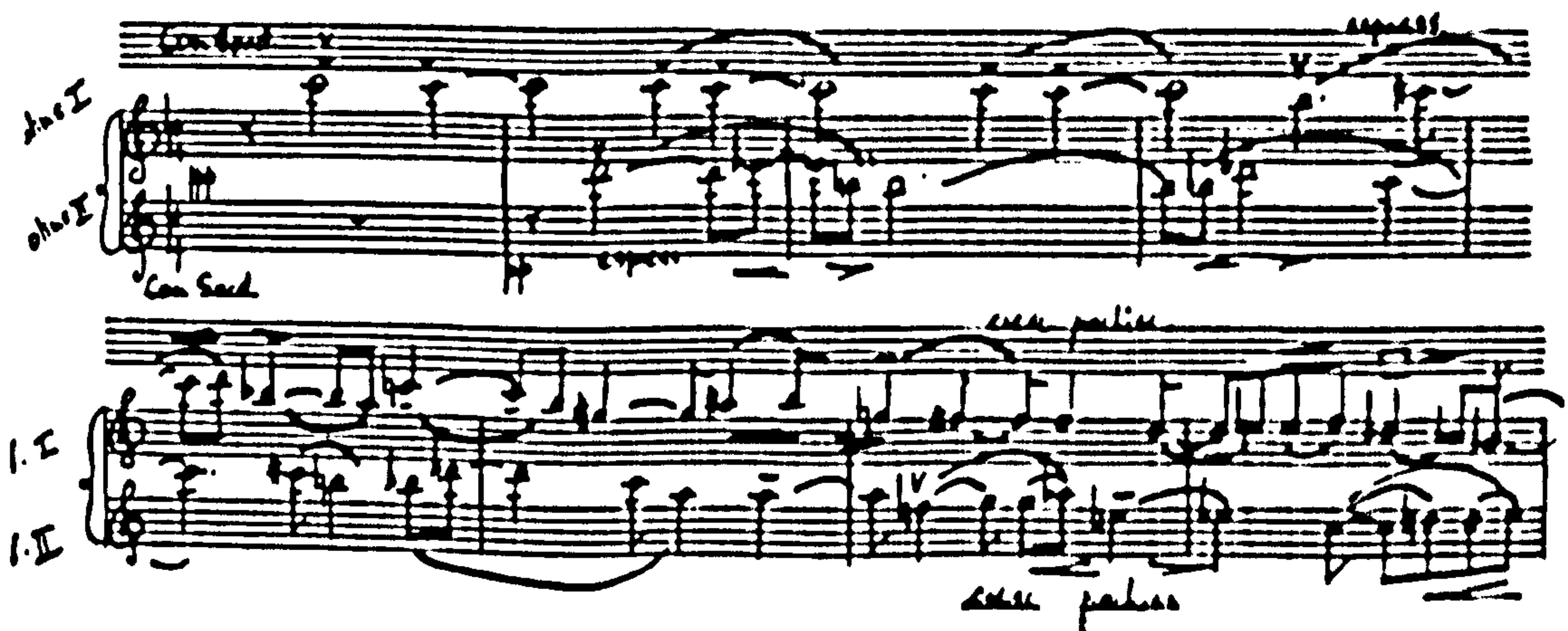
Prince-ly Port here, Hadst for Thy place of Birth, a base Out - sta-ble for thy

As always, serialism is not a technique employed to any extent in Leighton's choral music. In his choral writing, *God's Grandeur* is the most suggestive of serial techniques of the four smaller works contained in this group of five. A more intense dissonant quality than in all his choral works to this point, and no sense of a tonic key, are clear evidence of Leighton's use of serialism to stretch the tonality of a work. There are several points in the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* that use this similarly, but they are overridden by relatively long periods that could be labelled as in a specific key.

In the interests of entering the regular repertoire of both college and cathedral choirs – and perhaps even the better parish choirs – Leighton has coloured the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* with his own musical language, and defined for himself an accessible and straightforward technique to run in parallel with the density of his instrumental and orchestral works, but with no real element of compromise. *Nativitie* and *In Honorem* are subject to the subtle dissonance of his earlier works, but are only suggestive of serial techniques in the general absence of a tonic key and a frequently changing key.

Within the orchestra in *The Light Invisible*, there are many other opportunities for serial techniques than in the smaller choral works, although aside from the opening horn solo Leighton employs a chromatic but not necessarily serial style. The opening note-row played by the horn does recur and forms an important melodic theme on which much of the opening section of the work is based. The opening of the second part of *The Light Invisible* is also subject to an exposed note-row which is found between the two muted violin parts (Ex. 5.81). The improvisatory tenor entry that follows also covers 11 of the 12 notes of the chromatic scale over a considerable period of 15 bars, with much repetition, the final note provided by the tenors of the chorus as they echo the word 'light'. Beyond these, although they are not strictly introduced, there are no further obvious examples of note-rows. Each of the note-rows used in *The Light Invisible* appears to be unrelated, and those used to form themes in the opening of the second part do not recur as important musical material, particularly with the change of mood from darkness to light occurring fairly early on in the second part.

Ex. 5.81: *The Light Invisible* Opus 16 – Part II, bars 1 to 8



Leighton's sense of speech rhythm and his sensitive realisation of texts through word painting, in relation to the music and the textures he uses, have seemingly become fully



developed. The text of *Nativitie* displays many opportunities for subtle word painting and emphasis. The opening few words of the poem by John Donne are sympathetically treated, with a wide range on the opening word 'Immensity', helping to highlight the contrasting closer entries and texture found at the second word, 'cloysterd' (see Ex. 5.78). Word painting is also to be found over a longer period of time in Leighton's choral music, encapsulating moods of longer passages as well as the meaning of single words. This can be predominantly seen in *Nativitie*, where references to Jesus' mother Mary are accompanied by a mood of quiet and humble reverence and a generally more intimate closer texture, such as at 'in thy deare wombe', and towards the end of the piece at 'Kisse him, and with him into Egypt goe,/With his kinde mother, who partakes thy woe.' (Ex. 5.82) Speech rhythm is also an important factor, particularly the dotted rhythm on 'immensity' each time it occurs, and the further dotted rhythms on 'weake enough' and 'hath th'Inne'.

Ex. 5.82: *Nativitie* (1956) – irregular barring

The musical score for Ex. 5.82, *Nativitie* (1956), is presented on five staves. The lyrics are: "In-to E - gypt goe, With his kinde and with him in-to E - gypt goe, With his kinde goe, in-to E - gypt goe, With his kinde in-to E - gypt goe, With his kinde gypt goe, in-to E - gypt goe, With his kinde". The music features irregular barring and various dynamics including *mf*, *f*, and *p*.

moth - er, *pp* who part-takes, \_\_\_\_\_ who part-takes \_\_\_\_\_

moth - er, *p* who *pp* par-takes \_\_\_\_\_ thy woe, \_\_\_\_\_

moth - er, *p* who *pp* par-takes \_\_\_\_\_ thy \_\_\_\_\_

moth - er, *p* who *pp* par-takes \_\_\_\_\_

moth - er, *p* who *pp* par-takes \_\_\_\_\_ thy woe, \_\_\_\_\_

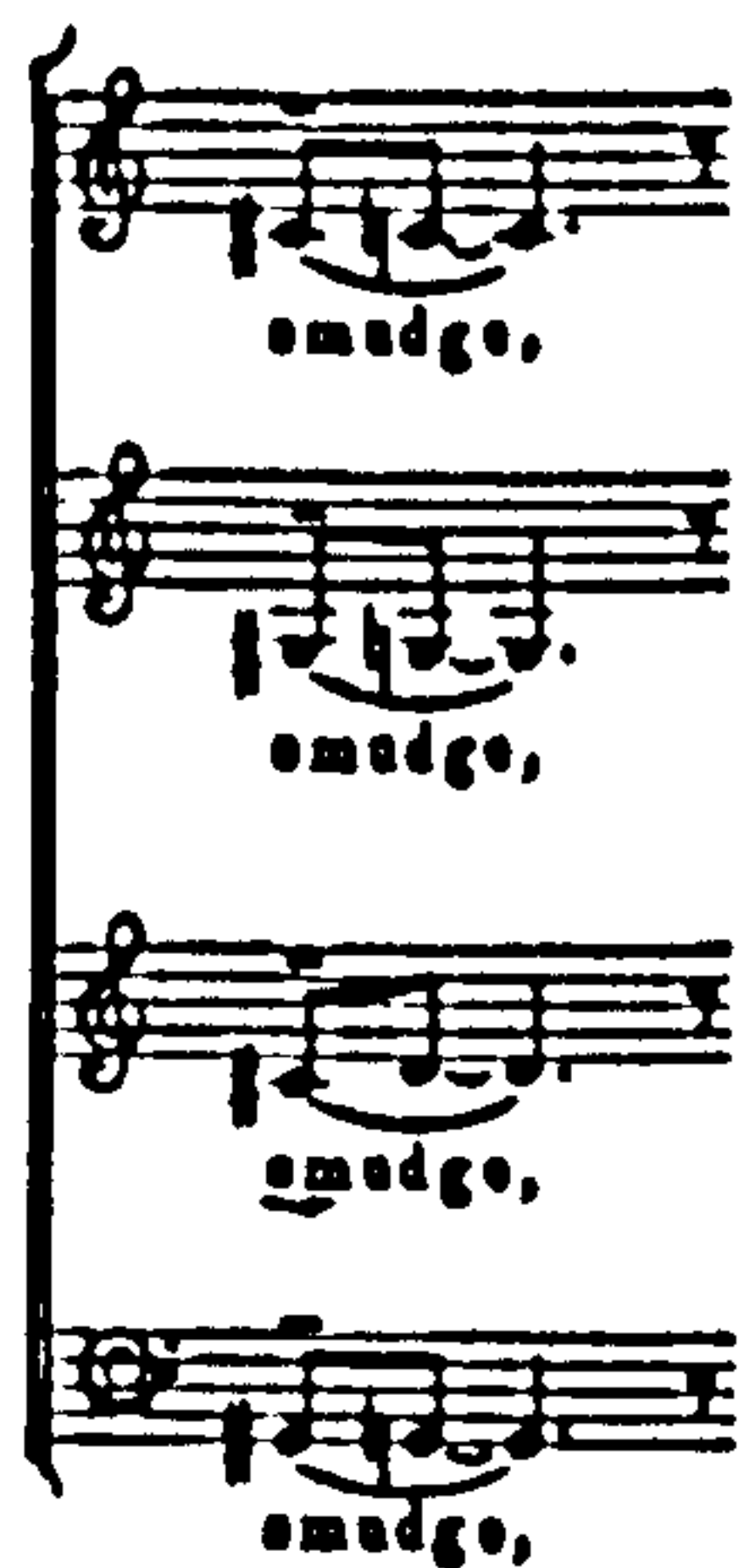
*God's Grandeur* is particularly akin to *The Birds* in its dramatic employment of word realisation and painting. The spiky double-dotted rhythms of the opening phrase and use of dissonance are also reminiscent of the bold opening statement of *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* Opus 24 (see Ex. 4.48 and 5.59). The dissonance has become almost harsh in bringing the full implications of Hopkins's words across, Leighton often changing only one note from the diatonic chord to achieve this effect. Words and phrases that are given the most discordant treatment include 'charged' in bar two, 'God' in bar five and 'It will flame out' from bar six (see Ex. 5.59). There are many examples of this kind, but two of the more vivid and innovative examples include the contrasting staccato and word 'shook' followed by a rest and a sustained chord on 'foil' in bar 10, and the chromatic shift on the word 'smudge' at bar 31 (Ex. 5.83i & ii).

**Ex. 5.83i: *God's Grandeur* (1957) – bars 10 to 11**

— from school fell, —



Ex. 5.83iii: *God's Grandeur* (1957) – bar 31



The *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, a text which has been set to music by a myriad of composers across the centuries, was clearly recognised by Leighton as something that had to be subject to a fresh and new quality at this time in Church music. The result takes in some of the most obvious features of the text as set by a number of other composers with soft and loud sections corresponding to the appropriate points, and the various moods, in particular the soft beginning of the *Nunc Dimittis* and the build towards the peak of the work through 'To be a light, to lighten the Gentiles' to 'and to be the glory of they people Israel'. There are also a number of unpredictable features, such as the soft 'Gloria' at the conclusion of the *Nunc Dimittis* and the soft reassurance of 'as he promis'd to our fore fathers, Abraham and his seed, forever', before the recapitulation of the opening at the 'Gloria'. Melisma is seen to be a continuing factor of his choral writing, although Leighton is careful never to detract from the speech rhythm, which is of the utmost importance. His use of melisma and the lengthening of some words can be seen as a further technique of word emphasis. In the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* prolonging of words is used at several pertinent points, including at 'soul' and 'magnify' in the opening choral phrase of the

*Magnificat*. Melisma is featured at, among others, 'rejoiced' at bar 13; 'blessed' from bar 37, and 'Glory' at the opening of the 'Gloria' (Ex. 5.84). In the *Nunc Dimittis*, the technique is not quite as frequent, but obvious examples include 'depart' in the first choral phrase, and at 'glory' at the crux of the *Nunc Dimittis* from bar 27 (see Ex. 5.75 and Ex. 5.85).

Ex. 5.84: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense* (1959) – *Magnificat* bars 136 to 141

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther, and to the Son.

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther, and to the Son.

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther, and to the Son.

Glo - ry be to the Fa - ther, and to the Son.

Ex. 5.85: *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis: Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense* (1959) – *Nunc Dimittis* bars 1 to 8

Molto calmo e lento  
(Un poco liberamente)

pp molto sostenuto cresc.

Lord, now lettest thou thy ser-vant de - part

pp molto sostenuto cresc.

Lord, now lettest thou thy ser-vant de - part

pp molto sostenuto cresc.

Lord, now lettest thou thy ser-vant de - part

pp molto sostenuto cresc.

Lord, now lettest thou thy ser-vant de - part

Molto calmo e lento  $\text{♩} = c. 53$

pp

Man.





\* \* \*

At this juncture in his career, Leighton's individual style had become firmly established. As a composer, a recognisable and distinct musical character can be considered an essential part of communicating and imparting a creative personality, ultimately to the listener. By this point, Leighton had decisively and convincingly proved his ability and credentials to be individual, versatile and often unique in his musical language, and also in conveying his intentions and worth as a writer of music.

Through this study of Leighton's early works, the conclusion can be drawn that the times of most constructive and formative progression occurred following his time at Oxford, while studying in Rome, and during the years that followed in Wakefield, Deal and subsequently

in Leeds. Despite the obvious widening of musical horizons provided with study abroad, and the total freedom provided by the period that followed, life-changing and defining events were also to occur that would profoundly affect Leighton. There were obvious periods of unrest as well as those of stability, but these years provided Leighton with the most concentrated opportunities for composition and experimentation up until the year 1960. In the period of 1956 to the end of 1959, teaching duties and other responsibilities would inevitably have affected how he composed, although the production of substantial works during this time is still admirably prolific. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that in these first few years in Edinburgh, Leighton was beginning to hone and perfect his style, rather than develop it. There are fewer new identifiable features to be pointed out in this closing chapter than in the previous two, the focus being concerned more with how his technique was to further absorb his defining stylistic features.

The growth of his individual musical language was relatively rapid: when comparing Leighton with one of his earliest influences, Ralph Vaughan Williams, who wrote most of his major works after the age of around 60, the speed of his development becomes particularly patent. Further maturity and stylistic traits were of course to be developed over time and defining techniques shared by later works, but the foundations laid by this initial development were, without a doubt, to form the cornerstone of his musical style throughout the remainder of his career.

There were, of course, many more musical works to follow, and this study does not cover some of his most substantial works: the first of his three numbered symphonies was



completed in 1964, while two more piano concertos, a number of significant instrumental compositions and further extended works for chamber and choral ensembles make up a considerable body of achievement. The largest of all these works, however, is in the form of his one and only full-scale opera in three acts, *Columba* Opus 77, consisting of well over two hours of music.

John Ogdon, in his published edition, concluded the following about Leighton's second serial piano work, the *Nine Variations*:

The *Variations* as a whole are powerfully reticent, at times becoming powerfully assertive. Dr Leighton's command of pianistic textures may be assumed, the clarity of his musical language, whose complexities in this work would appear to be, so to speak, arithmetical rather than algebraic, should render the *Variations* a useful source for the composition student as well as a valuable addition to the piano literature.<sup>21</sup>

Ogdon's point about the reserved nature of this work brings us back to Leighton's own summing up of the individual qualities of his work being 'tempered by common sense'.<sup>22</sup> One thing that has become obvious in studying this music is that Leighton is never reckless within his composition. Everything is measured, as well as having meaning and an appropriate place within a musical work, which also supports the sound structural policy that is frequently evident as well as an acute sense of musical economy. In the same way, nothing can ever be taken for granted or underestimated in Leighton's music. The careful sense of integrity and a reverence for form and traditional techniques within his musical language is often poignant, but ultimate satisfaction within a work is rarely gained easily. A

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<sup>21</sup> Ogdon, John, *Kenneth Leighton: Nine Variations for Piano* Opus 36, (London: Novello and Co. Ltd, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> Leighton, Kenneth, *Composing To-day* from *Twenty British Composers* (Ed. Dickinson, Peter), (London: Chester Music for the Feeney Trust, 1975), 8-9.

balanced discussion, and sometimes argument, is presented musically throughout many of his compositions; although not equally so in both miniatures and larger works, it is a strong feature of both. In this way Leighton's music is literally crammed with musical material, invention and eventually revelation. He often presents a real and present challenge to any listener to process, and even keep up with, works conceived with the maximum intelligence and intellectual creativity that Leighton poured into every composition.